No. 199 (New Series). Vol. 4., January 11. 1936

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The PASSING SHOW
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The SWORD *of the* Lord & *of* Gideon

by Achmed Abdullah

Illustrated by W. R. E. Stott

He was about to take her in his arms when she struck him across the face with her thorn stick.

"HERE," said Pir Ali, looking down upon the Valley of the Red Pilgrim that was stippled with the stone houses of his clan, "is the place for happiness and the full heart."

He laughed and added:

"The place, too, for the full stomach!"

For he has not eaten since the preceding evening; had trudged all that morning through the sterile, frowning Afghan mountains north-west of the Khyber Pass where nothing grew except dwarf-oak and laurel and stunted, black pine. Now he was hungry and weary—more hungry than weary—and so he came swiftly down the crumbling basalt slope, with the walk of the hill-bred, swinging from the hips with smooth, long, side-sweeping muscles, the feet stepping delicately and heel first.

He was happy.

This land—he told himself—was his own land. So honest and fine and clean it was: crowded with warm homes and fertile, green fields, the woods stirring with beast and bird, the quick little brooks bordered with scented, wild peppermint and whispering friendly gossip from rock to rock, and every door always on the latch, and the shaggy cattle roaming untethered, and always the pleasant odour of hard, russet grain and ruddy melons . . . and he home again—the Lord Allah be praised!

Home again from what he was pleased to call his "lawful quarrel and occupation" . . . and let none jeer at the wording, although by "lawful quarrel and occupation" Pir Ali meant that he had been to the wars as lance-sergeant in the 9th (The Duke of Connaught's Own) Indian Frontier Mounted Rifles, for the fair pay of two rupees a day, not to mention whatever loot—with the slightly embarrassed English officers coughing and looking the other way—had slipped most easily into his handsome, red breeches.

These same breeches he wore now, while the loot clanked silver and gold. Singing a jovial song it was—and he smiled broadly.

"*Wah*—" he thought—"how my tribesmen will gape and wonder and envy when I show them my riches—when I tell them tales of the many women I have loved here and there, and of the splendid fights I have fought in the service of the British!"

Not that he cared for the latter, nor owed them fealty. For he was an Afghan, a free man.

Yet Afghan, too, was he in this that strife to him was an aim and not a result, a thing worthy in itself, a proper, brave sport for a proper, brave man—until homesickness had come to him; home-sickness for this valley which at any time these last four years—in the great Indian cities where he had been in garrison, and on the bloody fields of battle where he had looked death in the face nor flinched—he had thronged in his dreams with his own folk, the kindly folk.

Thus, in his stilted peasant speech, he had told his colonel, Sir Malcolm M'Gregor, when his term of enlistment had ended.

"Hereafter, *saheb*," he had declared, "it will be the mountains for me—and a blithe, hearty girl of my clan to bear me strong sons and cook me fine food."

The colonel had been sorry to see him go.

"Re-enlist," he had advised in fluent Afghan, though with a heavy Scotch burr, "and—I promise you—before the year is over you will be a commissioned officer with gold braid on your tunic."

"No, no, *saheb!*" The other had shaken his head. "Give me the gold in the evening sky in my own land! Allah—I must go to the Valley of the Red Pilgrim! I must go there and roister with the merry, laughing men of the north—and kiss the women of the north . . ."

"I have been told, Sergeant Ali, that the south, too, has its share of women . . ."

"Not such women as ours! Ours sat on top of the heap when beauty was to be had for the asking."

Sir Malcolm had smiled.

"But," he had suggested, "I have heard about a Hindu girl whom you . . ."

"Oh yes!" Pir Ali had shrugged his shoulders. "A Hindu girl not uncomely—with a mouth like red rowan berries and the stars in her eyes! And a clever hand she has with curry and spices and stuffed mutton—and the sweet name of her is Lakshmi! And yet"—cavalierly—"I must go away from here. Nor can I take her with me, she being an unbeliever whose gods are a monkey and a flower . . ."

He had stepped to the door and saluted; had added:

"Peace on you, *saheb!*"

"And on you, Sergeant Ali! And if ever you return—remember the old regiment—good old regiment—it needs men like you . . ."

"I shall never return, *saheb*."

He had gone to Lakshmi's house. Straight out he had told her that he was off into the north.

"For a visit?" she had demanded.

"No. To stay . . . to marry a girl—of my clan . . ."

"You might marry me!"

"How can I? You are an unbeliever."

Lakshmi had trembled, and her voice had been like the voice of one who feels sharp steel pricking her throat.

"You—" she had stammered—"you love me no longer?"

"I love home more."

"Go, then—if you must!" She had stared at him. "Love is blind," she had whispered; and without the slightest irony: "I love *you!*"

For a second he had been conscious of remorse, of a strange, welling tenderness. But, quickly, he had brushed the feeling aside. He had crossed to the threshold.

She had run after him; had kissed him.

"May you find the happiness of your seeking, O my lord!" she had exclaimed.

So Pir Ali had left India, and now, so near his home, he quickened his pace.

He sniffed the air, cooled by the wailing northern thunder; he gave a throaty shout of sheer joy as, above the tree tops, he saw the smoke plumes from many hearths rise up the tight, blue sky; and he strode along eagerly—tall and lean, eagle-beaked, most gorgeously black-bearded, with a wide, generous mouth more ready to spread than to tighten, and, across the chasm of fearless, brown eyes, an unbroken ebony line where the brows joined as is the habit with those of a headlong, stubborn tendency to leap the fences of their own careless building.

A man not without a baker's dozen of coarse iniquities. Not precisely a safe customer to meet on a dark road and a dark night. Indeed, over-quick to help himself to plunder. Over-quick to smell insult, real or fancied. Over-quick to lash out with fist and slash out with dagger. Over-quick to kiss lips not meant for him at all.

But such is ever the way of the hill-blood. Such, too, the common understanding among us Afghans. And so we do not mind.

(*Continued overleaf*)

Continuing

The SWORD *of the* LORD & *of* GIDEON

He was turning the trail that led to his village when he heard a rustling of leaves, a snapping of dry stalks, a herder's high-pitched yell: "*Wah-hoo! Y'ellah! Wah-hoo!*"; and, out of a rhododendron thicket, driving a flock of goats with pointed thorn stick, came a young girl.

Brown-haired, grey-eyed, in peasant's dun-coloured homespun and thick-soled boots, staunch of body and with the promise, some day, of hale motherhood . . . not bad-looking, you would have said and passed on. Nor would you have craned your neck for a second glimpse. But Pir Ali saw more in her than the telling of the words. Lovely he thought her—perhaps because, these last four years, he had known only alien women.

He wondered who she might be. He would have recognised her, in spite of the time that had passed, had she belonged to his tribe; and there were no other tribes near here for her to be herding her goats at the entrance to the Valley of the Red Pilgrim.

So he bowed to her and asked:

"What is your name?"

"I am Zainab."

"And your father's name—your mother's . . .?"

"What matter? My parents are dead."

"May the earth be light in them! May they enjoy the delights of Paradise!" he mumbled decently; and went on: "Which is your clan?"

Her answer was strange:

"I have no clan."

Again he wondered; decided, finally, he did not care who she was. She was lovely—that was enough for him—and he said:

"I am Pir Ali."

"The one who has been to the foreign wars?"

"The same. You know my name?"

"I have heard of you."

"Naturally!" was his negligent comment. "My fame is wide-blown throughout these hills . . ."

"Your fame—" she smiled, "and—other things . . ."

"Eh . . .?"

"Your rowdiness—your lawlessness—and ever your sword at the wielding . . ."

He blushed a little—not for shame, but because he felt pleasantly flattered.

"Who told you all that?" he asked.

"Your mother. Do you deny the truth of it?"

"Why should I? Am I not the brisk, hearty man? But I wager my mother never told you that I am also a fool!"

"A fool?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because I have been storming through the far lands, with steel in fist, hunting for treasure—while here, at home, is the greatest treasure on earth."

"Your mother?"

"No—though she is dear to me. I mean—another woman"

"Who?"

"Yourself, O bird-song-at-the-lip!" And he added, and, being that sort of man, he believed the words as he spoke them: "I love you!"

Zainab laughed frankly, gaily.

"You do not know me," she replied.

"I shall learn you—and you shall learn me, from boot to bonnet. And—another thing . . ."

"What . . .?"

"Your mouth—tell me, is it soft?"

"I believe so."

"Let me find out for myself!"

He advanced a step, and she receded.

"Allah!" she exclaimed. "You seem an old hand, a shrewd hand, at this business of making love."

"I am," he admitted carelessly. "I have fallen in love a dozen times."

"Only a dozen times?" she mocked.

"Perhaps more. Yet, each time, I cheated myself. But I shall cheat myself no longer."

"How do you know?"

"Because you are the only woman in the world for me."

"Come on! Come on! The world is full of very choice women!"

"Which is no news to me. Only—you are the pick of them all. You are meant for me as the scabbard is for the sword, as ripe wheat for the swing of the scythe. *Hai-yai*—I came home to get me a wife—and—ah—I find her on the very threshold."

He decided he would make the duel short. There was no glory in it and the outcome was inevitable.

"It takes two to marry," she said.

"Yourself and me!"

She shook her head.

"No!"

"Yes, O gold-in-my-soul!"

"But—suppose I told you I love another . . ."

"I would not believe it—for the sake of the other lad's throat . . ."

And he was about to take her in his arms when, suddenly, her good-humour vanished, and she struck him across the face with her thorn stick.

He laughed.

"*Wah*—" he shouted as she ran away, followed by her goats—"I love you the more because of your savagery!"

That night, having eaten his fill, Pir Ali listened to Ayesha, his widowed mother, telling him that—yes—it was proper that he should choose a wife. In fact, she had already looked about here and there, and she lauded the beauty and lineage, the virtue and wealth of many a marriageable maiden. But, at the mention of each name, Pir Ali shook his head.

"I have already decided," he said, "who will be the mother of my sons."

A slow smile curled Ayesha's lips, giving to her wrinkled old face, queerly, a suggestion of beauty.

"What is the girl's name?" she demanded more gently.

"Zainab."

"Zainab? You—you know her?"

"I met her to-day, as I came down the trail. Who is she?"

"You cannot have her, son."

"That is to be seen." He laughed. "I usually get what I am after."

"Not this girl, O braggart. Listen . . ."

"Tell me first who she is. She told me that her parents are dead—that she has no clan . . ."

"That is so . . ."

And Ayesha described how in the war between the *Allemani-Khel* and the *Urrussi-Khel*, the Germans and the Russians—which, to her, spelled the world war—the northern Afghan border, too, had burst into flame; how, up yonder near Kushk, the Turkomans, the hated nomads, had once more been at their old tricks—raiding, looting, burning—killing the peasants at the plough, the babes at the breast, the grey-beards at prayer, the women at their baking and spinning.

Thus had been the fate of Zainab's tribe. The Turkomans had attacked and conquered; and the few survivors, panic stricken, had scattered to the seven winds. Some had fled to the Outer Mongolian Steppe and some to Persia, while a few had drifted south, into Afghanistan. And south, all alone, had come Zainab whose parents had been massacred; and her welcome, everywhere, had been chilly.

At last, weary and foot-sore, she had reached the Valley of the Red Pilgrim. This had been last winter, a few months before the death of Pir Ali's father. She had come to the latter's house; had knelt at his door; had spoken the traditional words of one who of free will becomes a slave, who sells body and soul for bed and board:

"Behold, O king! I have alighted at your threshold! I crave the protection of your heart and hand!"

Ayesha sighed.

"We needed neither slave nor servant," she went on. "For there were only the two of us—your father and I. But we could not send her away . . ."

"Oh—" demanded Pir Ali eagerly—"then she is here—with us?"

"She was until the caravaneers brought word that you were coming home. Our house is so small—just the two rooms. She has gone to live with Gurma, the blacksmith's widow."

Pir Ali rose. To his mother's question where he was going he replied:

"To talk to Zainab . . . to whisper a pleasant word to her that this house will be big enough for the three of us when we are man and wife . . ."

Ayesha stretched out a detaining hand.

"Stay here, my son," she begged. "Do not ask her. It would be useless."

"Useless . . .?"

"I tried to tell you before. But you would not listen. You see—at the end of the month she marries Kassem."

"You mean—Kassem, the priest?"

"Yes."

Pir Ali's mouth spread in a wide grin. He slapped his thighs with mirth.

"*Hai !*" he cried. "Can it be that Kassem is my rival for a girl's red lips? Kassem—that pious, weak-spined, praying, owl-faced . . ."

"Be quiet, O blasphemer!" interrupted his mother. "He is a holy man—a man of Allah . . ."

"Then let him lift his eyes to Allah—and not to woman- most certainly not to a woman whom I love!"

He went to the door. Again he laughed.

"Not that I dislike Kassem," he continued. "Indeed, I have always liked him. He is a good beard, a decent beard. But he—to marry Zainab . . .? *Wah*—should a beetle mate with a butterfly . . .?"

So he spoke as he stalked out of the room; and he spoke the truth.

For Kassem was small of stature. Ugly he was and large-eared and snub-nosed—not hook-nosed, as a proper Afghan should be—and, again unlike a proper Afghan, thin of beard. Besides, he was stoop-shouldered, from leaning long hours over books, as well as short-sighted. Decidedly, a man of most unprepossessing exterior.

Yet—and that, too, was the truth—Pir Ali had always liked him.

Already in the days of their childhood, when rough village lads had cruelly teased and tormented Kassem because of his bodily weakness and his quiet, studious habits, Pir Ali had taken his part and, to protect him, had fought many a wicked fight with fist or stone. A queer friendship it had been, sealed by a mutual vow, boyishly imitating the grim vow of the grown-ups, that never would one permit harm to come to the other :

"Poison to my heart—poison to my soul—if ever I break this oath."

So solemn they had been. Pir Ali smiled as he thought of it. But they had meant it; and, doubtless, meant it still.

Later on, Kassem had gone to a Persian seminary to prepare himself for the Moslem priesthood. Shortly before his friend had left for the south to enlist in the British-Indian army, the other had returned, a full-fledged, green-turbaned doctor of Koranic divinity. And Pir Ali remembered with amusement how the man, though as stoop-shouldered and short-sighted as ever, had brought back with him a measure of strength, strength not of the body but of the spirit—how, finding the tribesmen loath to go to mosque on Friday, the Lord's Day, the humble scholar had gone from door to door, lashing the people with the sharpness of his tongue; driving the great, hulking peasants, any one of whom might have crushed him with one hand, on to the House of God; and, that first Friday, preaching a fulminating sermon that, its lesson clearly pointed, had dealt with the words of the Good Book :

"*Who gave Jacob to the spoils and Israel to the robbers—did not I, the Lord . . . ?*"

Yes—thought Pir Ali—a pious beard, this Kassem, a decent beard.

But—Zainab's husband . . .?

No !

He, he himself, loved Zainab. And, presently, she would love him. Other girls had learned to love him, and they had not found the learning difficult.

For instance—and he grew conscious of a faint pang of regret—there had been Lakshmi, the little Hindu girl, back in Peshawar.

He had met her one afternoon outside the city gates in the tangled old garden of Timoor-Shah-the-Golden. She had been his from that hour on. He smiled. It was the way of the world—he considered —that women should always dance to the stronger lad's piping.

And why should Zainab be the exception to this pleasant rule . . .?

So he walked along, beneath an evening sky almost pallid, freckled with sparkling stars, and a round moon with an aureole rolling silver in the east, and the scent of field and forest thick upon the air; and he came to the house of the blacksmith's widow; and pushing open the door unceremoniously, he beheld there Zainab and by her side—bespectacled, scant-bearded, ludicrous—the priest Kassem.

The latter ran up to Pir Ali. He bade him heartily welcome.

"By Allah—" he cried—"I am happy to see you !"

"And I," replied the other, "shall be happy to see you—to-morrow."

"To-morrow . . .?" came the puzzled echo.

"Yes. Not to-night."

He picked up the smaller man in his great arms. Hugging him a little, since he was fond of him, he carried him across the threshold and dropped him there. Then, without paying the slightest attention to the priest's shouting and banging at the oak, he turned to Zainab—who laughed.

For she did not take his rowdiness seriously; thought it—as his love-making earlier in the day—a matter of jesting exuberance. Indeed, this very evening, Kassem had told her about him : about his gaiety, his recklessness, his careless audacity. He had told her, too, how, since childhood, they had been the best of friends; how they had sworn a solemn, boyish oath that never would one permit harm to come to the other.

Yes. She laughed. And Pir Ali misread her laugh.

He considered that he had been right : women danced to the stronger lad's piping . . .

"Here you are," he whispered, "and here am I. And, if you are willing, out there is my friend, the little priest—*hayah !*—listen to him beating at the door—and a word to him, and he will recite a chapter from the Koran and make us man and wife—to-night !"

Zainab frowned. There was, in Pir Ali's accents, a high, throbbing sincerity—and she wondered : could he be in earnest after all . . .?

"But—" she stammered—"Kassem and I . . ."

"What of it? Did you not tell me yourself, this morning, that the world is full of very choice women? Let Kassem help himself to any of them—to half a dozen, if he prefers—but not to you. You are mine, O delight !"

Then she understood that he meant what he said; and she became frightened a little; and, because of her fear, she spoke boldly :

"Surely you have learned neither modesty nor decency at your trade of sacking towns !"

"That is so," he admitted calmly. "For am I not the tall warrior—with medals and ribbons? Come—why be so coy about a kiss or two?"

She shook her head.

"I do not love you. I love Kassem."

"You will forget this Kassem. And you will love me—presently."

"Never !"

Her voice peaked; and he grew angry, since he had as fair a conceit of himself as the next man.

"What is wrong with me?" he demanded. "Eh —what is wrong with me? Good looks and bravery I have from my father's side—and my mother's people have been bards in their time and thoughtful folk. *Wah*—you could search the world over and find worse than myself !"

Zainab's reply was more conciliatory :

"I am not saying that I have found better than yourself. I am only saying that I have found the one I love."

"The one—I repeat—whom you will forget, after you have thrilled to the strength of me !"

Again, as earlier in the day, he was about to take her in his arms. Again she struck him across the face.

"By the Prophet—" she spat out the words—"you—with your strength, strength, strength !" At this moment, she hated him; hated him the more bitterly because the man whom she loved, the man who was trying to batter in the door with a rain of ineffectual blows, was so weak of body. "A buffalo has strength ! But would I take a buffalo for husband? A tiger has strength ! But would I marry a tiger? *Hay*—rather a buffalo, rather a tiger, rather a pitch-faced infidel, an eater of impurities, than you, O Pir Ali ! And even were there no Kassem on earth for me to cherish, I would still say to you : Never my lips to yours—never—never !"

So her cries rang, stinging like asps; and, suddenly, Pir Ali knew that she spoke the truth, that here was a woman not for him; and his heart was clogged with rage that gathered headway steadily; and he thought :

"Hate for hate I shall give her—and cruelty for cruelty. For we are both hill-whelps, feeding more on gall than honey."

He laughed thinly.

"Never your lips to mine—did you not say so? Ah !" he exclaimed, "and I say to you : Never your lips to Kassem's lips—never—never !"

She grew pale. It dawned upon her what he meant; and he went on :

"You knelt before my father. You became his slave. To-day you are *my* slave—my property—my chattel. I am your master—and I say once more : Never your lips to Kassem's lips !"

There was silence in the room. Silence, too, outside, where the priest had stopped banging at the door.

"You—" whispered Zainab after a while—"you cannot mean it . . .?"

"I do."

He left. On the threshold he passed Kassem, who had heard and who stretched out a detaining hand.

"Pir Ali—" he begged—"listen to me . . ."

"No—" the other shook off the thin, clutching fingers—"let me go . . ."

"You must listen. Why—we are friends, you and I. Dear you are to me . . ."

"Priestly prating ! How can I be dear to you—since—oh . . ." Pir Ali pointed through the open door into the room where Zainab had sunk on a couch, brooding, unhappy, her sobs coming distinctly.

"You are dear to me—in spite of this evil thing."

"Evil—to insist on my right—to uphold the ancient law?"

"A thousand laws cannot change evil into good."

"More priestly prating ! My mind is made up. Zainab is not for you. I love her . . ."

"You love her, perhaps, a little. But more do you love your own self, your strength, your stubborn pride, your naked desires." Kassem's voice was

(*Continued overleaf*)

Continuing

The SWORD *of the* LORD & *of* GIDEON

gentle. "And yet—consider the oath of friendship that binds you and me."

"An oath becomes a lie—always—when woman steps between man and man."

And Pir Ali returned to his mother's house, while Kassem went to Zainab's side.

"What shall we do?" she cried. "Oh—what shall we do . . .?"

The priest's words were stern:

"Trust in Allah! His mercies are untold!"

"But—Pir Ali—he has the cruelty—the power—the bright sword . . ."

"And I have read something in the Good Book about another sword." Kassem's voice rose exultingly. "'*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.*'"

For this weak man's faith was strong—though it might have trembled could he have overheard what passed the next morning between Pir Ali and his mother.

A few minutes earlier, Zainab had come to her. She had implored her to intercede; and Ayesha had replied:

"It is high time that someone talked sense to this son of mine." Her eyes had flashed. Her lips had tightened. "I shall talk to him! I myself!"

She went straight to Pir Ali's room.

"I was never the one to mince words or make them pretty," she began, facing him squarely.

"I know it. So—" smiling—"did my late father."

"Therefore—speaking about Zainab . . ."

"I know what you are going to say. And my answer is: No. She is my slave."

"Then, since she is your slave, why not make her yours by force?"

"How dare you?" he flared up. "I am a warrior—a soldier—with medals and ribbons! A proud man . . ."

"It is easy to speak of pride! Prove it to me!"

"Prove . . .?" he stammered. "How?"

"By being generous. There is Zainab—and Kassem. They love each other. Grant them permission to . . ."

"No!"

"Please!"

"No!" he repeated—and then Ayesha turned on him with high-piped taunts and insults and mockeries, informing him that it was as impossible to reason with the like of him as to strip two hides off one cow.

On she raced, in a mad, frothing, lashing jumble of words, cursing, imploring, flattering, again cursing, until, at last, Pir Ali threw up his hands and ran out of the room and over to the *hujra*, the communal village hall, where the grey-beards squatted on pillows, smoking their water-pipes and sipping their tea and talking about crops and cattle.

Doubtless, since gossip in the hills travels swiftly from door to door—they had already heard what had happened. So they looked up when Pir Ali entered. But nobody mentioned the matter. For they were Afghans, thus slightly hard, self-centred, not given to interfering in another man's life be its course good or bad, believing in the ancient maxim:

"Let each farmer clear away the snow from his own threshold!"

So they said nothing to Pir Ali beyond wishing him the time of day. Yet, by signs of hooded glances and thin lips, he knew what was in their minds. He knew that they were on Kassem's side and that he, himself, was unpopular—and, typically, this knowledge made him homesick.

Homesick, to-day, not for the hills, his own land; but for Peshawar, for India—and he thought of India—thought of Lakshmi——

How soft she was—how gentle—and he remembered how, on his going away into the north, she had whispered to him:

"May you find the happiness of your seeking, O my Lord!"

Well, he considered, he had not found happiness; and he added:

"Nor—by my honour!—will Zainab find happiness—nor Kassem!"

Zainab came to him that evening.

She humbled herself, kneeling before him. He did not budge. She stormed. He did not care.

"I hate you!" she exclaimed—and she went to the mosque where Kassem was studying some pious tome.

She spoke dully:

"It is hopeless. Pir Ali has made up his mind."

The priest smiled.

"Allah," he quoted, "does not close one door without opening another."

Then she grew impatient.

"Is there a reason," she demanded, "why mere man may not lend a helping hand at times to Allah?"

She was silent. But in her eyes was a look which said as plain as with the saying of words:

"Oh—why are you not as strong of body as you are of soul?"

She left; and the priest inclined his head.

"*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!*" he mumbled. "Ah—let this sword be between me and whatever harm!" and he went to the house of Kurd Khan, the chief of the tribe, who, not long later, called on Pir Ali.

"The salute!" was the chief's greeting.

"The salute! A pipe? A glass of tea?"

"No—thanks. I am here on a matter of business."

"Oh . . .?"

"About Zainab—and Kassem . . ."

"Useless to argue. She is my slave—by tribal law."

"There is yet another law."

"Namely . . .?"

"The one which decrees that, when a free man loves a slave girl, he has the right to challenge her owner—and claim her as his wife should he defeat the other."

Pir Ali was incredulous.

"You mean Kassem is challenging me—*me*——?"

"Yes."

"But—it is impossible. He is weak—and I am strong."

"So I told him. But he would not listen. You must fight him—to-morrow morning, after first prayer—on the village square. The salute, O Pir Ali!"

The chief left; and, the next moment, Ayesha, who had listened at the keyhole, rushed in.

"Are you going to do this deed—" she demanded—"to cross blades with a priest, a man of God, who knows nothing of sword-play?"

"It is not what I wish, mother. But—how can I help myself?"

"You can be generous. You can tell Kassem . . ."

"Never!"

Ayesha looked him up and down. Her voice was calm and passionless:

"You are no longer my son."

"A hard thing to say to your own flesh and blood."

"A just thing to say to one who is no longer my flesh and blood."

"I shall not hurt him very badly," he called after her as she stepped across the threshold. "No more than a scratch or two—to cool his liver . . ."

She did not hear; did not reply . . .

The village square in front of the mosque was bathed, the next morning, in the cold, golden sunlight of the mountains. It was crowded. The girls had neglected their flocks; the men their husbandry; the women their spinning wheels and milking stools; the children their crude toys.

There was amongst them an excited humming and zumming.

The priest—they thought—the weak man, short-sighted, stoop-shouldered—to do battle with this brave, this bully who stood there, with his legs like oak and his chest like a drum and his brawny arms bending the sword across his knees as if it were a switch . . . oh—it was not right!

So black glances were levelled at Pir Ali. Fists were clenched. Angry words rose.

"Peace!" commanded the chief. "The priest gave the challenge—Pir Ali accepted. He is abiding by the law. We must all abide by the law . . ."

"Ah—" sighed a woman—"here he is . . ." as Kassem came from the mosque, Zainab by his side, clinging to his arm and whispering:

"No, no, no! I cannot let you do it!"

"I must! I am no coward!"

"Of course not! But you have not the strength—nor the skill . . ."

"I have faith in the Lord," was the priest's stern rejoinder. "Have you so little faith?"

"Faith in the Lord? Yes. But . . ."

"No faith in me? Ah—the more reason why I must fight . . ."

He stepped forward. A large scimitar, which he had borrowed from the chief, was in his hand. Such a thin, nervous hand; a scholar's hand used to fingering reed-pen and paper, and now gripping this weapon which glistened golden in the golden rays of the sun; and his stature so small—like a child's compared to Pir Ali's towering bulk . . .

The latter shook his head.

"You are a priest," he said, "and I am a warrior with medals and ribbons on my chest. Strife is my trade—and you—why . . ."

"I am here to cross weapons, not words!" interrupted Kassem, conquering the fear in his heart with a high effort.

"Very well." Pir Ali shrugged his shoulders. He added: "I shall not hurt you much."

He spoke the words with pity; pity which, wrongly, the priest read as contempt—and he turned pale—and his voice was shrill:

"Defend yourself, O son of Adam!"

Out then at the other with a clatter of iron; and Pir Ali, there being nothing else to do, drew his own blade. He did it laughingly, almost affectionately, as he saw this little man, spectacles on nose, sword in hand, hardly knowing edge from hilt, yet attacking with a gallant, desperate bravado.

Well—he decided—he would make the duel short. There was no glory in it, and the outcome was inevitable. So he was satisfied with defending himself, elbow high and point shrewdly to one side, waiting for a chance to disarm the other; and, as the priest kept on attacking with a sort of clumsy violence, thinking:

"The little cockerel! The tough little cockerel! Why—who would have imagined . . .?"

He smiled; and Kassem saw the smile; and, perhaps for the first time in his life, he became conscious of hatred—and was ashamed of it, because of his incredible and amazing sinlessness . . . yet he continued rushing the fight—clash! clash! clash! steel on steel!—while Zainab watched.

She was frightened. And, too, elated. For was she not an Afghan? Were there not men here doing a dance of death for the price of her red lips?

"Power to your arms, O Kassem!" she cried.

But there was no power in those arms. Puny they were, feeble, trying helplessly to bear down the other's skilled defence . . . and—oh!—how tired he was—how the breath whistled in his tortured lungs . . .

"Fight on!" called Zainab. "Fight on for my sake, O just man!"

And he fought on, for her sake, praying to Allah, whispering: "'*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!*'"—and Pir Ali thinking, suddenly, queerly, that this girl, this Zainab, did not matter at all; that only Kassem mattered.

Kassem, his old friend. Kassem, who would not give in. Kassem, whom he could not kill—nor could he crush his pride by defeating him . . . and—what was he going to do—what was he going to do . . .?—and—"By the Prophet!" yelled the chief of the tribe as, all at once, the little priest's blade slashed crimson across Pir Ali's left wrist—as the latter dropped his weapon, while Kassem rushed up to him, sobbing:

"Forgive me—oh—forgive me!"

They embraced; and, an hour later, being now a free woman, Zainab became the wife of the priest and that, in a way, was the end of the story—until that same afternoon when Pir Ali, his injured wrist bandaged, was leaving his native village to enlist once more in the 9th (The Duke of Connaught's Own) Indian Frontier Mounted Rifles, and when, at the bend of the trail that led to the higher hills, he found Zainab and his mother waiting for him.

He was for passing them with a careless wave of the hand. But they stopped him.

"My eyes are sharp," said Zainab.

"So are mine," chimed in Ayesha.

"And what did your sharp eyes see?" Pir Ali smiled.

"They saw," replied Ayesha, "a brave man deliberately throw up his sword."

"Aye—" agreed Zainab—"and an honourable man deliberately choose defeat."

"It is known through the world—south, west, north, east—that I am both brave and honourable."

He kissed his mother; he turned to go; and Zainab said:

"My first son I shall call Pir Ali because—ah—I like you!"

"And my first daughter I shall call Zainab—because I like *you*!"

"Oh!"—and, strangely, Zainab became conscious of a faint stirring of jealousy—"you—you are going to . . .?"

"To take a wife unto myself—yes! Lakshmi is her name—a sweet name—by the honour of my nose! And she is a Hindu, an unbeliever! And so, belike"—with a wink—"you will ask your husband, the priest, to pray for my soul—to intercede for me with Allah and His Prophet!"

And once more Pir Ali kissed his mother; kissed Zainab; and was off into the south . . .

My Secrets

by the Rt. Rev. H. A. Wilson

BISHOP of CHELMSFORD

(In an interview with Daphne Clare)

IN my diocese of Chelmsford there are more than one and three quarter million people. And a large number of them are unhappy.

It was my knowledge that this unhappiness existed, and my belief that the individual treatment of these men and women is a much neglected duty, which made me ask myself: "What can be done to help them?"

My answer, after much careful thought, was the drawing up of a list of "spiritual advisers"—men and women to whom I can send those in trouble for advice and sympathy. In this way I hope to bring back poise and happiness and peace to the worried and anxious. Surely there is no work more worth while doing.

For unhappy people are not the best citizens. Their unhappiness affects their work, although this affect may sometimes be so subtle as not to be obvious on the surface. It affects their leisure, from which they are not able to get the full benefit. And if they are married it affects their homes and especially the lives of their children.

Now the church has always been the consoler to whom people have taken their troubles. The priest was the man to whom they unburdened their souls in the sure knowledge that confidences would be respected. They found in him kindness, sympathy and understanding—all powerful healers. In addition he gave them, to the best of his ability, sound advice about how to live in future.

But in recent years a great advance has been made in the scientific treatment of spiritual illness. And the doctors have been mainly responsible for it.

To-day these illnesses are called "psychological." But the new name does not alter the old complaint. The trained professional psychologist is, however, bringing new scientific knowledge to cure the old complaint—knowledge which is very valuable and is undoubtedly producing very good results.

I firmly believe, however, that to be absolutely successful in curing these nerve cases, the treatment must be linked up with religion.

Personality has three sides—the intellectual, the emotional, and the spiritual. If you ignore the spiritual then you are lopping off one whole side of a person's make-up and are bound to get something which is out of balance.

I believe that it is because too many of us are trying to do without religion that we suffer so much from nervous breakdowns. A man can no more be happy without God than he can be healthy without food.

So in the planning of a scheme to provide suitable "advisers" to help these spiritually sick people, I had to keep in mind three things.

The people I chose must be religious. They must have such a broad understanding of human nature as to have a great deal of sympathy with its frailties. And they must possess some of the scientific knowledge of the professional psychologist. Furthermore, these three requirements, not easy to find singly, must be combined in one person.

I need hardly add that to find suitable people is very difficult, and that my list is by no means completely filled.

There were other practical difficulties in the way of selection. Should I choose only clergy? Or should I choose laymen as well? Should they be men only or men and women?

Then I foresaw that a published list would cause at least misunderstanding if not offence. Would not the flock of every diligent parish priest inevitably say: "Evidently the Bishop does not think much of *our* parson as a spiritual guide, for he hasn't put *his* name down on the list."

You see my difficulty? So I have made my list and kept it secret. Whenever I am approached either by clergy who want guidance or by people in spiritual difficulty, I am only too happy to recommend them to a "spiritual adviser." I choose the one who, in my judgment, may be able best to help them.

Take the case of a business man working in the city. I am quoting this because it is typical of many. He is young, has a good position, a charming wife whom he loves very dearly, and a happy home.

But in the office he has a pretty secretary. They are obliged to work late one night. Just as they are finishing he suddenly realises how attractive she is. They are the only ones left in the office. He forgets himself for a minute, puts his arms round her and kisses her. That's all. Nothing more.

But he has never done this sort of thing before and on the way home he feels ashamed of himself. Finally he comes to me in a state of great agitation, and tells me the whole story.

"What am I to do?" he asks, really troubled. "I feel such a cad. I feel I can't look my wife in the face. I want to tell her but I'm afraid. We've been such wonderful pals that I'm afraid if she knows she'll never forgive me. I'm afraid it will do something to spoil her love for me."

I send him to, shall I say, Mr. X, who is a mature man, an experienced "man of the world," and a churchman. Mark that last. *It is most essential.*

Mr. X also works in the city, and that will give them a good common ground to start off from. He is, moreover, a sociable man with a sense of humour, very normal nerves himself, and is the father of a growing family of happy, healthy children.

He listens sympathetically to the whole story just as I heard it.

Now what must he do? Laugh at the younger man and say, "Why that's nothing! Men are doing that sort of thing every day. Forget about it."

By no means. This man, remember, is troubled about his conduct, and rightly so. To him it is a thing about which he feels deeply ashamed, a thing capable of destroying his self-respect.

What we must do first is to restore his self-respect. So Mr. X, who understands psychology, says something like this to him.

"Look here, old chap, it *was* a rotten thing to do. Don't do it again. But if I were you I wouldn't worry about it too much. After all no great harm has been done. You haven't told your wife any lies about working late and then taken the girl out to dinner and the theatre. You ought to be careful, of course, with a young girl working in the same office, because if you stir up feelings in her you may do *her* some damage of which you will never know the extent. It's a dangerous thing to do.

"But we're all human and we all do things we ought not to do. I shouldn't think too much about it if I were you. Don't tell your wife if you don't want to. But if you did tell her I think you'd probably find she would understand and forgive you."

Still the matter was not quite cleared up. For the man found that now he could not work in the same office as the girl secretary. It worried him. So Mr. X came to me about it and between us we found a way out of the difficulty. I am not prepared to say what the solution was but it was entirely successful and after a few weeks he confessed his fault to his wife and she, strangely enough, took even more pride in him for his honesty in owning up and that man was his normal happy self again.

Another typical case is that of a wife who has been married for ten or fifteen years and suspects her husband of unfaithfulness. She is very hurt about it at first. Then she feels very bitter and it gets on her nerves. Her husband, who has always been her confidant in other troubles, cannot help her with this one.

She is the mother of four children, still very attractive, but has lost her figure and is not too good at dressing herself. She comes to me. I talk to her sympathetically for a few minutes and then out comes the whole story, which has been pent up for months. She is really heartbroken about it because she loves her husband and has really tried to be a good wife.

Now what would be the use of sending that woman to a young unmarried man, even if he is a parson? No, for her I choose Mrs. W——, a woman round about 50 who has a great deal of tact and sympathy, is married herself and has grown-up children, knows the world, and understands the art of making the most of her appearance.

Following a hint I have given her, Mrs. W—— begins the "treatment" with something like this. "Why not take some of the time you have been giving to the children, spend a little less on the house, and devote that time exclusively to yourself. You've got lovely eyes, you know, and very pretty hair. I think we could do something to make that hair look even prettier. And I'll tell you of something that will take all the roughness off your hands."

This case is going to take a long time. But Mrs. W—— is patient. Gradually she gets the sufferer to take a new interest in herself. She helps her with her clothes and soon succeeds in making her look much smarter. This improvement in her appearance gives her new self-confidence. In nine cases out of ten that very confidence will make her husband stop and think and then admire.

It would not be appropriate to discuss the cases when people are troubled over some definite sin of a grave kind.

Perhaps it is a serious lapse from morality or honesty, the memory of it festers and forms an abscess in the soul.

There are multitudes of such people: men, women and children haunted by a dark episode of maybe years ago.

Yes, "the modern man" *is* "bothering about his sins." It is only a sympathetic guide who knows the way—who can lead him to peace with God and himself.

One of the most important points to remember is that a scheme of this kind will only be a success with people who want to be helped. Therefore whatever is done must be done voluntarily by the one suffering.

I would like to stress the point that in no case will pressure of any kind be brought to bear upon a person to persuade them to undertake treatment. They will come to me to ask my advice about how best to treat a sickness of the spirit, in exactly the same way as they would consult a Harley Street specialist about how best to cure an illness of the body.

There is an UN*building*

by
W·J
PASSINGHAM

Even churches are coming under the housebreaker's mattock.

YOU who are the proud owners of suburban villas valued at £1,000, or thereabouts—have you ever considered how much it would cost you to pull the house down? Queer thought, eh?

But there are people to whom such queer thoughts mean a livelihood, and they have been frantically busy during recent years in this country. They are experts in the art of demolition, the pulling down of houses and other buildings.

During the last five years about 50,000 houses have been pulled down, in fact, about 14,000 of them in the last six months or so, and something like 52,000 more remain on the list for demolition. While most of the new houses—about 2,655,000 of them since the Armistice was signed—have been erected in suburban fields, thousands of sites in towns and cities have had to be cleared and levelled by housebreakers to make way for blocks of luxury flats and smaller houses better suited to modern requirements.

A careless estimate for demolition on the part of the housebreaker will probably mean heavy losses in carrying out a contract. Your new house, for example, is not the kind of proposition the housebreakers are seeking at the present time, because there happens to be a poor market for the materials it contains. There is so much demolition going on all over the country just now that the lumber yards are filled to overflowing.

Moreover, in considering his estimate, the housewrecker will probably require certain information from the firm which built your house. Since bricks form the main item of all the materials salvaged, the problem of cement and mortar is an important one.

Bricks that have been laid with cement, instead of mortar, are a bad bargain in the demolition business because owing to the strength and clinging qualities of cement the bricks cannot be easily separated and cleaned. Usually a brick wall laid with cement will break away in large blocks, whereas bricks held together with mortar simply fall apart when handled by experts.

Bricks that have been cleaned of old mortar command a price of about 30s. per thousand, whereas mere blocks of bricks and cement are a liability in that it costs cartage money to clear them off the site. The stronger the walls of your house, the more unprofitable they may become to the housewrecker.

Pale-coloured bricks of the cheaper kind, however, cannot even be given away, and are classed as "dirt." The charge for pulling down a new house of the £1,000 class, therefore, is between £30 and £50, according to circumstances.

A big, old-fashioned house of the Victorian type, such as are now being demolished in many parts of London to make sites for blocks of luxury flats, might cost £2,000 to pull down if there are no interior fittings of particular value. Many houses in Mayfair cost anything from £1,000 to £3,000 to pull down, according to their condition.

With houses of this kind credit is allowed by the housewrecker for such fittings as Adam fireplaces, marble of various kinds, staircases and panelling. But to find really valuable fittings in old houses is the exception rather than the rule.

When found in good condition, Adam fireplaces are worth from £50 to £150, according to their period, a marble fireplace may fetch from £5 to £10, a staircase may be just firewood or worth £100, and panelling is a speculative article with a value that depends entirely on age and preservation. In some cases, with a house of 20 to 30 rooms, the panelling might be worth as much as £200 to £300. All these items, of course, have to be taken into consideration when making an estimate for demolition.

The housewrecker divides all materials on which he can make money into six groups, and these are brick, stone, timber, glass, rubble, and dirt. In this case "dirt" represents anything that has no resale value, and it usually consists of mortar cleaned from the bricks. Since "dirt" is a liability when a wrecker is making his estimate, he must always allow for the cost of taking it away from the site.

All "dirt" taken away from London building sites is usually dropped into barges and taken along the Thames to the Essex and Kent shores of the estuary where it is used in the foundations of new arterial roads.

Flagstones have a fine market nowadays for the decoration of new gardens to suburban houses. These are thrown from a lorry on to a hard surface so that they break into suitable fragments for "crazy" paving. But bricks probably show the best return of all materials salvaged by the housewreckers. In many cases bricks are used for the outside walls of new structures, and even in a very bad condition they may still be used to advantage in the inner course of a wall.

Sometimes old bricks will have a higher intrinsic value than new ones, having been burned at a time when coal was cheap and there was no temptation to underburn the brick. When there is a poor market for old bricks in good condition, it is worth while to store them until the price rises.

There are instances when the timber taken from an old building turns out to be one of the most valuable materials salvaged, especially when a really ancient structure is torn down. This kind of seasoned timber is eagerly sought for by architects for making beamed ceilings, and it has an additional value if the beams bear the adze marks of the original hewer.

For this particular purpose it is impossible to fake new beams to make them look like old ones, and with genuine old beams there is no chance of warping as is the case with the kiln-dried timber used to-day. There is also value in boards, joists, studs, sills, plates, doors, and even laths. Old laths are used by packers in boxes of goods sent abroad by export merchants. Doors in particular can be renovated to add charm and a suggestion of age to modern buildings, and people are always hunting for good specimens in housewreckers' yards.

Other items of timber include stairs, balusters, and newel-posts, and buyers vary from the big engineering firms who buy all the heavy timber available, to the radio enthusiast who searches a wrecker's yard for an aerial-pole.

The romantic side of the housewrecker's work is in the speculative business of buying up an old mansion in the country just for the privilege of pulling it down. In this case the work becomes something of a treasure hunt. The law of treasure-trove grants the possession of valuables discovered to the original owner, if he can legally establish ownership.

But the contract between the housewrecker and the owner of a building usually stipulates that when the place has been duly vacated and turned over for demolition, all of the contents belong to the wrecker—regardless of what may be found secreted anywhere on the premises. Under these circumstances, of course, the possibilities are endless, but one story will suffice to show just what the housewrecker has to expect.

An old manor house in Norfolk was being pulled down by a firm of housebreakers from London. During the demolishment one of the workmen was attracted by an iron pipe which he found had no apparent purpose, and which was sealed carefully at both ends. On breaking the seal he found £500 in sovereigns stacked neatly inside the pipe. When he turned the sovereigns over to his employer the latter gave him only five pounds by way of reward. So the workman, in his disappointment, wrote to the original owner of the house and informed him of the discovery. The result was a long legal action which took a substantial toll of the 500 sovereigns.

Workmen often conceal their finds, and only occasionally are they discovered with the treasure. One man was detained with a bulky parcel which contained a fine set of Delft ware taken from a cupboard concealed in a wall, and another workman found himself in a police court charged with distributing base coins. He had to explain that he found the coins secreted in a brick wall, and thought they were genuine half-crowns. Perhaps the greatest misfortune of all occurred to a housewrecker engaged in pulling down a fine old Victorian mansion in London. When he came to look over the premises, the housewrecker found a splendid marble statue which seemed to him a valuable item.

He went to an architect with the tale of his discovery, and, after examining the statue, the architect offered a good price, which was readily accepted. Only when he and his men came to remove the statue did the housewrecker understand the reason for it being left on his hands. The statue weighed many tons, and two days were wasted in taking it from its pedestal and moving it down two flights of stairs. A powerful motor-lorry was waiting outside the house to take the statue away. Then, on the last flight of steps leading down to the pavement, a roller slipped—and so also did the statue, which crashed to the ground and broke into fragments.

The housewrecker who is content to take his profit from the sale of stone, brick, timber, and other commodities in a building, without any thoughts of gambling on special items, generally makes money. But sometimes he loses through circumstances that are quite outside his business.

Tenants of old Victorian houses in quiet, tree-

BOOM..

Pulling down an old mansion may become a treasure hunt.

lined London squares, for example, may be horrified when they learn that the house next door is to be demolished, and do all in their power to prevent what they regard as an act of vandalism. Then the housewrecker finds himself in a difficult position, and faced with outrageous demands for compensation from the tenants of the adjoining property.

It is just as difficult to pull down a big, strongly-built house in a profitable manner, as it is to build one. Plucking a fine old four-storey mansion from out of a whole row of them calls for both skill and judgment. In the first place, a plan of the doomed house is made, and a careful study of the walls of adjoining property is also necessary before these are shored up for safety. If this operation is not properly carried out, and a subsidence occurs in the walls of houses next door, there follows a legal action for damages.

But houses being demolished in a busy neighbourhood are always a potential danger, and therefore must be visited frequently by the borough surveyor, who himself sees that everything is made safe. If the borough surveyor is not satisfied with what has been done, he has the authority to demand such precautions as he thinks are necessary for the public safety.

Operations begin on the roof, and the men work downwards to the ground. The very first thing done is to erect wide "fans," sloping wooden platforms which catch falling debris that would otherwise drop into the road or upon the heads of passers by. There is a proper organisation for house-wrecking, and lorries must be waiting on the spot to keep the site clear of the materials torn down. This work involves a close estimate of all expenses against the problematical returns from the sale of the contents.

In spite of all his calculations, the bidder for the privilege of demolishing old structures can easily be mistaken. The exterior of an old building can be very deceptive, and hide a veritable fortress of brickwork so that the execution of the contract may involve the housewrecker in heavy losses. This concerns only the very big jobs, such as the pulling down of the Hotel Cecil on the Thames Embankment, and these do not occur frequently and are sought for only by the largest firms in the demolition business.

Men engaged on this work consist, apart from the foreman, of two classes. There are the labourers, whose only qualification is their ability to fetch and carry, and the "mattock" men—named after the chief tool of their trade. A mattock looks much the same as a pick-axe, except that it has two cutting ends turned at horizontal and vertical angles to deal with a course of brickwork.

This is the tool to be seen in the hands of those men who perch themselves on crumbling walls high above the city streets, and who calmly knock away the support from beneath their own feet. Like cats they climb, undeterred by dizzy heights, and they only require a foothold on the edge of a precipice to work quite comfortably with death waiting below them.

"Mattock" men usually go from father to son, and most of them would scorn any other class of work in the building business. Yet, in spite of their work being fraught with constant danger, they receive very little more in wages than other building operatives.

"Like cats, they climb, and only require a foothold on the edge of a precipice to work comfortably . . . . most would scorn any class of building work."

One of the most thrilling shows ever seen above London was performed by "mattock" men in a thoroughly respectable neighbourhood in Kensington, and it went on for some time before the foreman in charge noticed a crowd of hysterical men and women staring upward on the opposite pavement. The foreman ran out into the roadway, and, following the direction of the crowd, witnessed an amazing scene. He confessed afterwards that he couldn't believe his own eyes. There, perched on a narrow wall high up among the rooftops, was his best "mattock" man pirouetting about on his clogs like a mad toe-dancer, and a few feet away another trusted workman was tap-dancing on a half-demolished chimney-stack. Sitting between the two was another man playing a mouth-organ!

Shouting seemed only to spur the crazy dancers on to further efforts, so the foreman dashed back inside the building and made for the roof. Up on the roof he was dumbfounded to find four men—all singing drunk! The question was, where had the liquor come from? He knew that the men had been perfectly sober when they started work. Questions failed to throw any light on the mystery, and he sent the men home.

On the following day, however, the foreman kept a close watch on his men, but he failed to find anything unusual. Yet that same day two more men became too drunk to work, and others were suspiciously merry. Only when he had occasion to go down into the basement was the mystery cleared up. Below the basement floor was a well-stocked, but forgotten, wine-cellar!

On another occasion the workmen employed by the same firm of housewreckers discovered a large circular tin box, heavily soldered and airtight. They said nothing of this discovery to the foreman, but waited for an opportunity to open the tin in secret. Imagine the surprise of the foreman when some time later he suddenly appeared on the roof to find his men eating chunks of wedding cake!

This particular firm of housewreckers is an old-established one, and articles bearing its distinctive mark have returned to the firm's possession after being sold as long as thirty years ago. They once salvaged a rare but damaged mantelpiece from an old mansion, and this was carefully renovated by experts before it was sold. Fifteen years later the housewreckers found the same mantelpiece in a house about to be pulled down. Thus two separate profits were made on the same article.

Another prize was found quite unexpectedly after an old country mansion had been pulled down, and a 45-foot cellar—filled with debris—was exposed. When the debris was removed, the mouth of a well was discovered in the floor of the cellar. The well was found to be lined with heavy oak planks which had always remained below water-level so that they had not rotted but turned a beautiful blue colour. This unique wood was afterwards made up into a splendid round table, and sold for £200.

In recent years a new market has opened up for the contents of "period" houses. The whole interior of many a fine old English mansion has been bought outright by film producers for stage settings. Whole staircases, fire-places, areas of panelling, and even entire sets of window-frames are bought up by film companies.

During preparations for the production of a big film the "property" men tour the housewreckers' yards for material to make up scenes. But the housewrecker has grown wise in his generation, and when he finds a good period "piece" he does not sell it because he finds that lending it out for stage property is a better proposition. Film companies will hire staircases, curious doors, windows, mantelpieces and even statues at good prices.

The story goes that on one occasion a house-wrecker and his wife went to see a film in which Greta Garbo played the leading part. As the famous actress appeared on the screen walking down a fine old staircase, the housewrecker's wife remarked in a hushed whisper:

"That's Greta Garbo."

"Never mind her," retorted the proud housewrecker. "Take a good look at that staircase. They bought it from me!"

As might be expected, one of the best stories about demolition comes from America.

One building, constructed like a fortress, was the Assay Office, and housewreckers fought shy of making a contract for its demolition because of the strength of the place.

Finally the contract was accepted by a firm of housewreckers new to the business, and the old hands gathered round to watch the fun. The new firm began operations by carefully *burning* away the floors in sections. Nobody had remembered that tons of valuable metal had passed over the floors, one storey alone yielded about £700 worth of silver.

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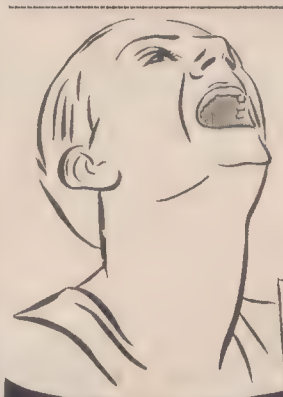

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GREAT MAN *and* TWO WOMEN

"Perhaps you will tell me the title of your book so that we don't clash."

Short Short Story by

W. A. Sweeney

Illustrated by Hamilton Williams

THE appearance of John Ferns's autobiography caused a literary sensation. He was an outstanding figure in the world of letters, universally acknowledged for his talent, and his autobiography, written in the virile admirable prose that distinguished his novels, had a force and interest which made it a work of art.

When it was the topic of newspaper "book pages," literary reviews, and every gathering place where it was essential to have read the late literary sensation, John Ferns's divorced wife, Margaret, wrote him an interesting letter.

"I have read your autobiography with great interest," she wrote, "and I congratulate you on the characteristically original manner in which you have handled it. It will make a greater profit for you than any of your novels. You say (not in these words, of course—you are too clever not to be able to convey the same thing more elegantly) that I was not the wife for a writer, an artist, a poor man driving his way towards success in the face of unrecognition and literary decadence.

"What comical beings you literary men are! Only your wives know how vain and weak you are! The world has read your books, John, and columns have been written on their strength, boldness, analysis and control of the literary art. A whole generation has modelled its philosophy on your novels, but they do not know that you are one of the weakest men who ever put feet in slippers. How *could* I love you? Strong, *you*? You, with an everlasting fear of sickness, the nervous excitement of a girl on examination day when criticisms of your work appeared, followed by hysterical anger and childish depression when the critics were unfavourable. You with your assiduous efforts at cultivating people who would be useful to you in your climb towards literary eminence . . . I helped you there, for I came to you rich when you were poor. You lived for yourself, John, for the praise ringing round your name, for the admiration and adulation that you accepted under false pretences, for you are not the man your admirers think. They have not seen you, as I have, in the days of our poverty, when all my money had gone, and we were living from hand to mouth on the proceeds of your occasionally accepted manuscripts, that brought in about enough money to nourish a canary, ranting at the world that neglected your talents.

"Doubtless, among your women readers, there are many who would like to have been your wife, as I was. I would like to ask them how they could love—or how long they would love—a man who chased them out of the room because he could not find the proper synonym in a sentence . . . I bear you no ill-will, John; around me I hear your name lauded to the skies, and I say nothing. Sometimes, though, I think it a pity that I do not write the truth."

To this penetrating and encouraging missive John Ferns replied:

"Dear Margaret,—Your characteristic letter came like a hot blast from the furnace of suffering whose gates clanged behind me when the Divorce Court relieved me of the martyrdom of living with you. Your character, Margaret, is the result of your strange and unhealthy upbringing—a character which I realised, too late, was tyrannical to the point of subjugating a man's soul as well as his body. You did all you could to kill my belief in myself, and now with a letter you would make a final effort. Too late, Margaret. You say you came to me rich when I was poor. But you knew that one day I should achieve eminence. You enriched yourself a lot by me. You became intelligent; you learned good English. When you came to me you could not have written the letter I have just received. That I was weak with you I admit, but it was you who enfeebled me, and even you, Margaret, will admit that my strength is on a different plane, that a man whom you would call weak can produce a work of great art. If the public finds strength in my work, rest assured the strength is there. How could you love me, you ask. Another woman has found it possible, and we are to be married shortly. Her character is directly the opposite to yours, it is simple, uncomplicated and kind."

About five years after this exchange of correspondence John Ferns died, and was buried to the sound of Fleet Street's thunder on the passing of a great man of letters.

About two years after his death Margaret, his first wife, received a letter from Mrs. Ferns, the second, asking if she might call and see her. The two women knew each other by sight, and the request was granted.

"In going through some correspondence of my husband's," Mrs. Ferns said, after she had come to the point of her visit, "I came across a letter you wrote him—just after his autobiography appeared." She paused. "It was most illuminating."

"In what way?" asked Margaret sweetly.

"Well," Mrs. Ferns weighed her words, "it was so *right*," she finished quietly.

"It would be difficult to make the world believe it," murmured Margaret.

"I know; isn't it odd? John Ferns never knew his own character, I think; he who was the super-analyst of character. . . He died, I supposed, convinced he was a great and wise man, and only you and I knew how little he was."

The other woman nodded. "And the rest thought him so strong. For the world he was something of a standard bearer, a man with a message written in fire."

"And the world still thinks it," said Mrs. Ferns, looking a trifle mysteriously into the fire. "His 'forceful' attacks on people and things really sprang from a disguised timidity."

"So you found that out," thought Margaret. Then: "Mrs. Ferns, will you tell me why, precisely, you called to tell me this?"

"Perhaps I needed to tell it to somebody and, don't you see, you are the only person to whom I could say it. So much has been written about John that I—and you—have had to read while we longed to shout the disillusioning truth from the housetops. You have had the same feeling as I; I know from your letter to him. Tell me, Mrs. Brampton" (Margaret had changed her name) "about your early days with him. That is a part of John's life I have never known. He was poor when you married him."

"He was nothing when I married him," replied Margaret, gazing at the coals.

"Nothing," Mrs. Ferns repeated musingly. "Was he really anything when he died?" she murmured. "I wonder if you have any correspondence relating to that period of his life which you would permit me to see."

"But why?" Margaret's eyes had sharpened.

"Well, you see, I think it's time someone wrote the true history of John Ferns, man of letters. And so I thought of writing his life." She paused. "In a matter affecting—well, in what pertains to *Art*, the truth should be told, not the falsehoods that have been floating about——"

Margaret interrupted with a musical laugh. "That sounds just a little like John," she said. "Odd, isn't it? But—are you a writer?"

"N-no, not quite, of course, but I am convinced I can handle John's biography—or, at least, a book telling what he really was in character. My life with him . . . So I wondered if you would be agreeable to let me have some data for that part of his life with you before I knew him."

Margaret shook her head. "I'm sorry," she said, "but, you see, I'm writing a book of memoirs of my association with him myself."

Mrs. Ferns laughed rather queerly. "How strange! But you don't write in the ordinary way, either, Mrs. Brampton, do you?"

"This will be my first essay in literature."

"One would almost say that John's mantle had dropped on us," Mrs. Ferns laughed rather queerly again, and arose. "Perhaps you would tell me the title of your book," she said, "so that we don't clash."

Margaret told her, and eventually she went home. She sat down at once and wrote a letter to Ravenbrook, the publisher.

"Mrs. Brampton," she wrote, "John Ferns's first wife, you know, informs me to-day that she, too, is writing a book about him. Isn't it awful? There is only one thing to do—I can't get out of her when she expects it to appear—and that is to hurry on the publication of *my* book. We'll have to forestall her. I managed to get her to disclose the title. She is calling it *A Man Who Was Nothing*. I was pleased to hear from you this morning that my American and Scandinavian rights are already sold. I think the price is excellent and quite agree with you that *John Ferns in Slippers* ought to run into figures much in excess of his own biography."

Deep down in his richly sculptured tomb, far away, the man who was nothing, John Ferns, smiled in his sleep at some secret jest.

The BELL

AT first, Philbertson made the mistake of speaking about the bell. He heard it one evening, three weeks after the muffin man's death. There was no mistaking that bustling, cheerful clangour, though it seemed to be some distance away. He turned his head sharply, and listened.

"What's a muffin man doing, this time of the evening?" he muttered.

The man he had been chatting with on the street corner missed the actual words, and took them to refer to a remark of his own.

"Now, now! No mumbling excuses!" he said heartily. "You know I'm right, Philbertson. You need a holiday, and you need it badly. All law and no play makes Jack a dull boy. Ha, ha!"

"What's the use of trying to sell muffins at this hour?" said Philbertson, plucking irritably at his lower lip. "Whoever it is, he must be mad."

"Eh? What's that you say?"

"That bell," said Philbertson, with a jerk of his head. "What's he want to be out ringing it now for? There's no sense in it."

"Bell?"

"Listen. There it is again."

"Damned if I can hear a bell," said the fat man.

"Nonsense!" said Philbertson, suddenly unreasonably angry at the stupidity of this reply. "You must hear it. There it is. It's louder now. You can hear *that*, can't you?"

The fat man cocked his head sideways and drew his eyebrows together, in a supreme effort of concentration.

"Blessed if I can!" he said, shaking his head.

Philbertson felt his anger rise. He wanted to strike the fool. But he controlled himself, remembering that he was a solicitor chatting casually with a useful client. Harbord was a great fat fool. A man like that *wouldn't* hear!

Harbord shot a curious glance at him.

"What sort of a bell?" he asked.

"Just a bell," said Philbertson shortly. "It's nothing. I just wondered, that's all. Well, goodnight to you."

"Goodnight," said Harbord.

He paused a moment, looking after the thin figure of the lawyer with irresolute concern. Then he shrugged his shoulders and wandered along to his club, where he forgot the incident in a game of billiards with Dr. Sevenhurst.

Philbertson returned to his gloomy old house overlooking the churchyard. That night he stayed a long while at his bedroom window, staring out over the moonlit crosses and headstones to where, in a far corner, he could just make out the mound of a new grave, with some pale flowers on it.

"And he thought he could blackmail *me*!" he murmured once.

When at length he got into bed, and humped the clothes snugly round his bony shoulders, there was a faint smile on his thin lips.

Twice more in the next month Philbertson spoke of the bell to others, only to meet puzzled looks. Then the disquieting truth flashed on him, making him feel physically sick.

For a bad two hours he sat motionless at his desk in his office and faced the fact. There was no bell. No muffin man had taken Thompson's place, or if he had, that was not the bell.

Philbertson shivered. Since early boyhood, as far back as he could recall, he had been subject occasionally to terrifying nightmares and strange waking fancies. They usually came when he was overworked or had gone through some severe emotional strain. He had learnt to guard against them, to some extent. But he strove now in vain to remember any hallucination so vivid, so convincing as these three experiences of the bell.

Harbord's words came back to him. "You need a holiday. You need it badly." Yes, that was it, that was it! He clutched at the thought desperately, manufacturing relief out of it, investing it with the power to heal his mind. Of course! Overwork. That was it. That, and all that he had gone through on account of Thompson.

A holiday would set him up—put an end to all that. It wasn't as though he had any regrets—no nonsense of remorse—for what he had done. He had done the best possible thing, and done it so that no one would ever suspect. Thompson meant nothing to him, anyway. It was late in the year for a holiday, but what of that? Sea breezes to blow the cobwebs away, that was what he wanted, and a nip in the air would make it so much the better!

The reaction of this resolve, after the fright of his discovery, swung him over to a shaky sort of exhilaration. The sense of his sixty years went from him. It was with an almost boyish excitement that he bounced his hand on the desk-bell to summon Messiter, who would be left in charge.

That evening, still borne on that wave of novel exhilaration, Philbertson took a step which he had been meditating hesitantly ever since the funeral. At seven o'clock a taxi was jolting him over the deep-rutted lane leading to a farmhouse four miles from the town, and a few minutes later he had explained his mission to the farmer's wife, a big, full-bosomed woman of about forty, with soft brown eyes.

"Oh, sir!" she exclaimed, when he had finished, and her expression, and the tone of her voice, told him her gratitude better than any eloquence could have done.

She turned her head at the sound of hobnailed boots at work on the scraper outside the back door.

"Joe! Joe, come in here!" And when a stocky, shy man with friendly blue eyes had clumped into the kitchen: "You know Mr. Philbertson, Joe," she went on quickly. "He's come about poor Fred. About the funeral expenses. It's——"

"I don't want to seem to intrude on your private affairs," put in Philbertson, smiling. "But as a farmer, I am sure you have plenty of uses for your money, and if you would allow me, it would be a pleasure, I assure you. You won't be offended, I hope."

The farmer looked bewildered.

"But, sir—you're not offering to pay for Fred's funeral?"

"If you will let me," said the lawyer.

"Fred used to run errands for Mr. Philbertson sometimes, Joe," the woman explained. "It's very kind of him to come and offer to help us like this."

"I should think it is," said the farmer warmly.

"Not at all, Mr. Briggs. Your brother-in-law was quite a character in the town. Apart from the little services he did for me, I should like to feel that I had done something towards his—er—last expenses. I don't like to see the—the old faces going."

Philbertson stopped awkwardly. Their grateful and admiring gazes were unexpectedly embarrassing, interfering with that smooth control of the scene which he had confidently anticipated. He was annoyed with himself.

There was a pause. A sudden shaft of fear struck into him, extraordinarily keen, like a thin knife, fear lest his stumbling speech, his restless hands, should start them *thinking*—suspecting. He wished he had not come.

But the farmer and his wife, simple, good-hearted people themselves, set his embarrassment down to his credit.

When Philbertson left, warmed by a glass of elderberry wine and nursing on his bony knees a basket of apples which it had been impossible to refuse, the couple stood side by side at the garden gate and watched the taxi cautiously jolting away up the lane. So powerful had been the influence of their emotion that Philbertson was persuaded, for the time being, into the illusion that he was a genuine benefactor. His mind ignored the fact of the murder, and dwelt only on the sentimental satisfaction of the recent scene. He felt that he had been generous, that their gratitude was deserved. And he was definitely glad now that he had come.

A sudden shaft of fear struck Philbertson. He wished he had not come.

By the next morning, this mood had spent itself, and he was back amongst realities; but his satisfaction over the visit to the farm remained. He had taken, he knew, the one step that must remove him for ever from all suspicion in the minds of the only relatives of the deceased. And he had satisfied himself, in any case, that they looked on the affair as a pure accident. Poor Fred had gone over into the quarry at night, after he had had one or two, and that was all there was to it. There was nothing for him to fear.

Three days later Philbertson started his holiday.

"I shall be back in the office on Monday fortnight," he told Messiter.

But he was back before the first week was out, and his head clerk was secretly shocked at the change in him. He had looked tired and worried before; now he looked worse, far worse. His thin face was more drawn, his mouth tighter. And there was something different about his eyes.

Five nights Philbertson had been away, and every night he had heard the bell. Now that he was back he continued to hear it, night after night. It was the old familiar jangle of the muffin man's bell, exactly the same as when he used to pace the pavements, towards tea-time, with his tray of muffins and crumpets balanced on his head. It had been a cheerful sound then, and it was no different now, as a sound. But with each occasion that he heard it, Philbertson's terror of it deepened.

He tried sleeping draughts, but they upset his heart, never strong, and the sleep they gave him was riddled through with nightmares from which he awoke with a feeling of suffocation and panic.

He gave up the sleeping draughts. Then, curiously,

A Complete Story by ALEX BARBER

Illustrated by Greenup

for a whole month he was free from the bell. The relief was indescribably sweet. He would go to bed, encouraging himself to believe that all would be well, yet aware of dread underlying his reassurances. When morning came, and he found himself refreshed, he could hardly believe his good fortune. By some trick of his mind—so he told himself—the trouble had been dispelled. He clung to this thought. At the end of a fortnight he believed it. The beginning of the fourth week found him confidently established in the conviction that the persecution was over.

He was even able to glance cautiously back, as it were, at the phenomenon, and find it comprehensible. With his particular make-up, and taking into consideration all the strain—possibly largely unconscious—which his brain and nervous system must have undergone before the business of Thompson had been completed . . . oh, yes, one could understand it. Not at all surprising, when you came to think of it. After all, murder is an exceptional thing in one's life. And the blackmailer's threats that had gone before it . . . Reaction, nothing more. And now, thank goodness, his mind had settled back into the normal run of things. That particular episode was over and done with.

Then, one morning Messiter, who had observed the improvement in his employer during the past four weeks, saw a change in him again. He had grown haggard since yesterday, and the look in his eyes—that frightened look which puzzled Messiter—had returned.

Seven nights more without respite from that bell in his brain, and Philbertson realised that this could not go on. He must fight the bell and beat it—or be beaten by it.

And if, despite everything, he should fail?

Philbertson prepared for that. He never used anything to help him to get to sleep now, but he made a habit of carrying a small metal tube containing twelve tablets. He had been warned of the effect of an overdose. With as many as twelve, the result was inevitable.

He entered now on a series of nocturnal agonies so intense that his very soul seemed to be torn between two violent hands. Time and again he acknowledged defeat, gave up all hope, reached for the tube of tablets which meant an end of the bell, with its mocking, goading insistence on his crime. But something always held him back at the last moment, and he found, somewhere in his tortured mind, new power to resist. And gradually, gradually, his opponent weakened.

That was how he thought of the bell now—as a living enemy, beating relentlessly at his reason, at his life. He fought it frantically, forcing himself by an agonised effort of will to concentrate on other thoughts. For weeks he could discern no progress. He became ill, and went on with his mysterious battle in hospital, and then a convalescent home. Doctors questioned him, but his cunning was too much for them. He was determined to hold fast his secret. It should die with him. He had killed Thompson. He had done it at the right time, in the right way, and even his sister and her husband had no suspicion! Even in his worst times that thought would flash into his mind and bring a sort of gloating comfort.

Then he began to feel the strain lessening. One night he reduced the bell to a faint, distant tinkle in an hour. Thenceforward, little by little he gained the mastery over it, subjected it to his will.

It was peace—of a sort, and at a price. Philbertson knew, deep within himself, that it was a surface victory only. He had a conviction that he had not got rid of the bell, only developed a technique of defence against it. When he was abnormally fatigued and sometimes for other reasons which he could not always track down, he would lose his mastery, be at the mercy of that insistent cling-clang for the greater part of the night. No devices of distraction could shut it out for long then. Their positions were reversed. The bell was master once more, and it jangled, jangled at him, until he wanted to scream, rush out into the streets, cry aloud the truth, the damning truth about the muffin man's death. But he always kept himself from that folly. At least he managed that, in his acutest terror.

One curious thing consoled him, and he fastened on it with all the fanatical strength of his superstitious mind. The bell had never rung in daylight. It had been evening when he first heard it, and it was in the silent hours of the night that he suffered his worst agonies. But his torment always ended with the dawn.

He had murdered Thompson in the darkness. He had been standing in the soft darkness when he had heard Thompson's terrible scream, heard the thud of Thompson's body against rock far below—a moan—another—and then only silence and darkness all round him.

Autumn of the following year brought changes for which he had been making arrangements. Philbertson's became Stockey and Frowde's, with a new brass plate on the door and new office furniture with a new smell. Philbertson was pleased with the price he had got. It compensated for what he was dropping over the house beside the churchyard.

He had intended to go to an hotel whilst the transfer of his home to a house twenty miles away, by the sea, took place under the jealous eye and caustic tongue of his housekeeper, Mrs. Mellish. But Mrs. Briggs, the farmer's wife, was so urgent—almost tearful—in begging him to stay with them for a night or two, or as long as he wished, that he gave way. It amused him a little to reflect that this eagerly hospitable woman was Thompson's sister. How eager would she have been to have him in her house if she had known the truth?

His welcome at the farmhouse was hearty if injudicious. He only realised the injudiciousness after he had jumped into bed. His head was buzzing. Too much of that home-made wine. But hearty welcome, all the same, hearty welcome. Peaceful here, if it wasn't for this infernal buzzing. Nice people. Good people. Good, simple souls. Thompson's brother and sister-in-law. No, sister and brother-in-law. Most welcoming. Home-made wine. . . .

Philbertson awoke an hour later, in a cold sweat. He sat up and listened, his hands clenched. No, he had dreamt it. Only a dream! Thank God for that!

Indescribably relieved, he lay down on his side, curled up his legs and prepared to drop off again.

Then he heard it. The bell. It was no dream. It was the bell again. It was the bell, the bell, the bell. With a moan, feeling his weakness, his helplessness against it, he struggled up again to a sitting position and clasped his head in his hands.

The bell jangled on; then stopped; then jangled again.

Philbertson got out of bed, paced the room wearily in his night-shirt. There was a respite. He thought it had finished. He willed it to finish. He approached the bed, walking lightly, hoping, praying.

It began again—jangle, jangle, that merry jangle heralding the muffin man. Philbertson looked grey and ill. He sank on to the bed, fell rather than lay back, stared at the vague pallor which was the ceiling.

The bell jangled on. . . .

The morning light, thin and grey, slid furtively into the bedroom. The light strengthened. Birds were chirping tentatively in the branches outside. Philbertson lay slanting across the bed, quite still. His whole body seemed to be listening.

The room was clearly lighted now. Day was fully here.

Philbertson lifted his face. His lips moved, but the words were lost. He swallowed. Then his whisper:

"Not even now! Oh, God! Oh, God!"

Moaning, he twisted over, slid to the floor, stood up, trembling. He crossed the room with the steps of a very old man, and his trembling hand fumbled in his clothes, neatly folded on a chair. A ray of light winked back sharply from something in his hand. A small metal cap dropped to the floor and rolled merrily away under the wash-stand. He lifted his hand to his mouth, and his head went back. . . .

Dr. Sevenhurst picked up his hat from a chair and his bag from the stone floor. He had finished. Briskly, matter-of-factly, he had made his examination upstairs, then come down into the farmhouse kitchen, questioned Briggs and his wife, spoken of the inquest which would be necessary. He was a sharp little man of fifty, very quick in his movements and speech, and somehow giving always the impression, even when he was standing still, of having to catch a train with scant time to do it in.

Neither the farmer nor his wife said anything. They seemed rather dazed. The doctor felt the need for some light remark to relieve the tension, but he was not good at light remarks.

"Hullo," he said, with exaggerated interest, turning his head towards the open doorway, "what's that?"

"What, doctor?" said Briggs, glad of a direct question.

"Thought I heard a bell. Don't keep belled sheep here, do you?"

"That's just a bell in the orchard," explained Briggs. "I rigged it up to keep some of the birds off. It's a bell my wife's brother Fred used to use, muffin-ringing, before he went where *he's* gone, poor chap!" and the farmer jerked his head towards the room above, where Philbertson's body lay. "The wife likes to think he's helping us with his bell."

"Sometimes at night," said the woman, "I wake up and hear it and think it is Fred still ringing it."

"There!" said the farmer. "That's the fancies she has! Will you have a glass of elderberry wine before you go on, doctor?"

MAKE *your own* Weather

by EDGAR MIDDLETON

IT will soon be possible to make one's own weather. A new house will be fitted up with a dial like that on a wireless set.

It will only be necessary to stretch out one's hand, turn on the indicator, and the room will be flooded with golden sunshine, or fanned by cooling breezes, as may be required.

Air conditioning, as it is called, is the latest craze from America. There every hotel, boarding-house, and big shop now is fitted up with the apparatus. Builders are forced to put up conditioned tenement buildings, even a large number of railway carriages have been converted.

For some years past various of the big American film theatres in the West End of London have been air conditioned. Sleeping cars on various of the Scotch expresses are fitted up with the apparatus, as also is the House of Commons.

But it is only during recent months that this new scientific development has become popular with the public at large. Now it is a highly flourishing industry.

Thermometers outside may be at well below zero. On the other hand, there may be a heat wave so fierce that people are collapsing in the streets below, conditioned air in the house remains at the same even temperature.

Better Health

It is not necessary for the fortunate tenant of the air-conditioned house to bother about keeping cool or warm. Instruments automatically keep a check on conditions for him, and themselves adjust the controls which maintain the air at the right temperature.

In summer it is dried and cooled, in winter heated and moistened.

It is not only in this matter of personal comfort that air conditioning plays its part. It will make it possible to start a number of new industries and provide employment. What is more important, it will prove extremely beneficial to our health.

It is rather disturbing to think that, normally, the air we breathe is filled with particles of dust. In residential districts these are comparatively minute, but in industrial areas they are sometimes as big as snowflakes.

These dust particles, if composed of soot or material of a similar weight, fall freely at about the rate of six inches per hour. So that investigation has proved in the air of any large town, or city, there is always approximately one pound of dirt, while a dust-bin full of dirt will filter into the average-sized house in that city every year.

It Cleans the Air

Air conditioning washes the air of these particles of dust, like cleaning a lettuce for a salad, and sends it back again clean and wholesome.

To appreciate the way in which it will make for personal comfort it must be understood how heat affects the human body.

Human comfort depends on the body being hotter than the surrounding atmosphere. Heat is constantly being generated within the body and must be got rid of. As long as the surrounding atmosphere is cooler, everything is well. But immediately the temperature starts to equal that of our bodies, we are unable to dispose of our surplus heat. When the thermometer rises to such a degree that the air temperature exceeds that of the body, heat is transferred from the air to the body.

The hotter that the surrounding air becomes, the more our body strives to maintain the same temperature, with resulting discomfort in the way of perspiration.

So in summer air conditioning prevents that perspiration by cooling the air, while in the winter, when it becomes necessary, it provides moisture.

Not content with having made us healthier, this new system is going to provide an outlet for our new-found vitality in the shape of increased employment.

It must be remembered that certain materials are just as susceptible to atmosphere as are human beings. These materials absorb or give off moisture in proportion to the moisture contained in the surrounding atmosphere. This moisture that they contain greatly affects their characteristics. Deprived of the necessary amount they lose in weight, strength, elasticity and pliability.

That is why in the past certain materials, as, in particular, cotton, could only be manufactured in areas around Manchester where there is plenty of rain.

Now, by means of this new process cotton could be manufactured almost anywhere there is a sufficiently damp climate. Scientifically created conditions take the place of those formally provided by nature, and the results are often more satisfactory.

How does it work? In reality air conditioning is a simple process. The sticky, fatigued atmosphere is drawn through openings in the floors of buildings that have been equipped with the necessary plant and travels down pipes to the basement, where are housed the air-conditioning machines.

There it is filtered through oil-saturated blankets of spun-glass, washed in water-sprays, cooled with refrigerating coils, condensed out of excess humidity, and sent out again through insulated pipes, re-entering the room by means of grilles in the ceiling; cleaned, washed and fresh.

Once the system has been properly developed every well-equipped house will have an air infiltration equal to one complete air change per hour.

To make this purified air suit every human requirement has been prepared a comfort chart.

From his high sealed windows the New Yorker looks out on a sky which in its worst moods cannot affect his comfort—for indoors the perfect climate is on tap.

Portable Climate

This chart shows a composite comfort curve, that has been based on conditions in an average home. On it are marked an average winter and an average summer comfort zone.

The necessary data was provided by a long series of investigations that were conducted by the United States Public Health Service. Tests were made on a large number of subjects under all sorts of atmospheric conditions.

Some were placed in rooms of boiling hot steam, others were shut up in ice-cold cellars for hours on end while scientists carefully analysed and tabulated their feelings.

Air-conditioning engineers, however, are by no means content with their present achievements. They now seek fresh fields of conquest. Recently it has been made possible to get rid of objectionable smells while, instead of using the same, fresh air is brought in from outside. This is claimed to have the property of vitalisation.

Air-conditioning plants vary in size like wireless sets. At one end of the scale is the huge machine that conditions the Rockefeller Centre in New York. The latter gives a summer cooling effect equal to that obtainable from a block of ice the size of a small coastal steamer.

The other extreme is the portable conditioner. The latter is for use in offices and private houses. One model costs about £100 and the same to run as the usual domestic refrigerator.

These portables can be wheeled about from room to room. They work on the same principle as the bigger plants, but with a single outside pipe, that sucks in the used air and sends out the fresh in the same way through openings in the floor and grilles in the ceiling.

Portable conditioners will serve two living-rooms.

As to what has already been achieved by means of this new process there is no doubt.

You can shut out noise

A restaurant proprietor reported that since air conditioning was installed in his premises his business had more than trebled.

One firm found that efficiency in the office and freedom from illness improved by one-third. Another discovered that the blanketing of traffic noises by means of double closed windows, only possible with conditioned air, was responsible for a 21 per cent. increase in business.

But this is only the start. Discussing the subject with a well-known architect the other day, he dropped a hint that a further development in air conditioning is now contemplated. The system is to be introduced, on a wide scale, into factories and workshops to improve health conditions in industrial life.

At the same time conditioned air is to be provided to flats and dwelling-houses, working-class areas on the municipal basis that to-day are gas, light and water.

NEXT WEEK—

FLYING BLIND!

Laughter

The "PASSING SHOW" Smile Section

"See—I fixed them each up with a new set."

The engine-driver goes to the pictures.

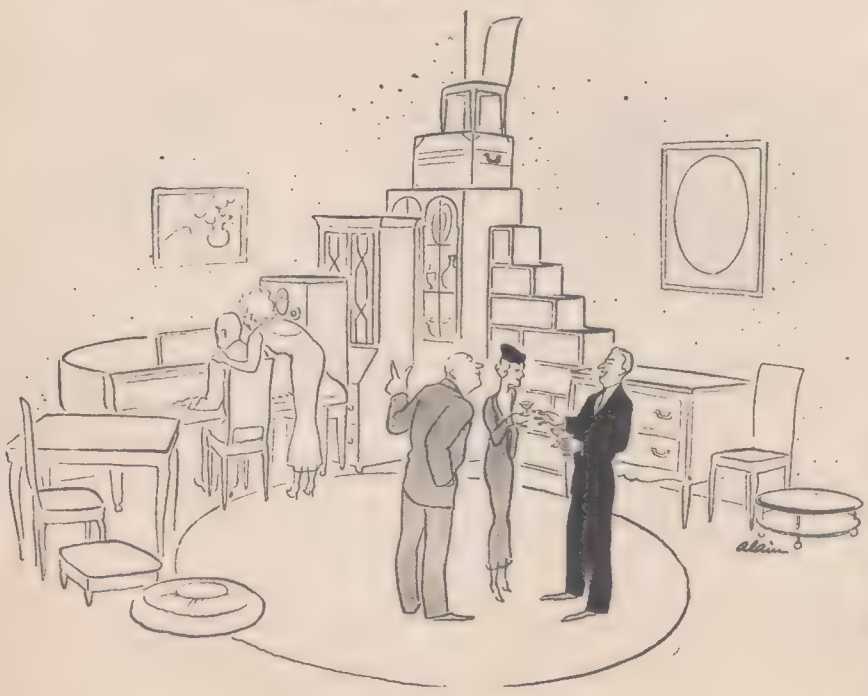
"Mummy sent me over with some sandwiches for you, Daddy."

"Just nip in the caravan and ask the clairvoyant where we blinkin' well are."

A MAN AND A PLUMBING JOB

"That's for good luck!"

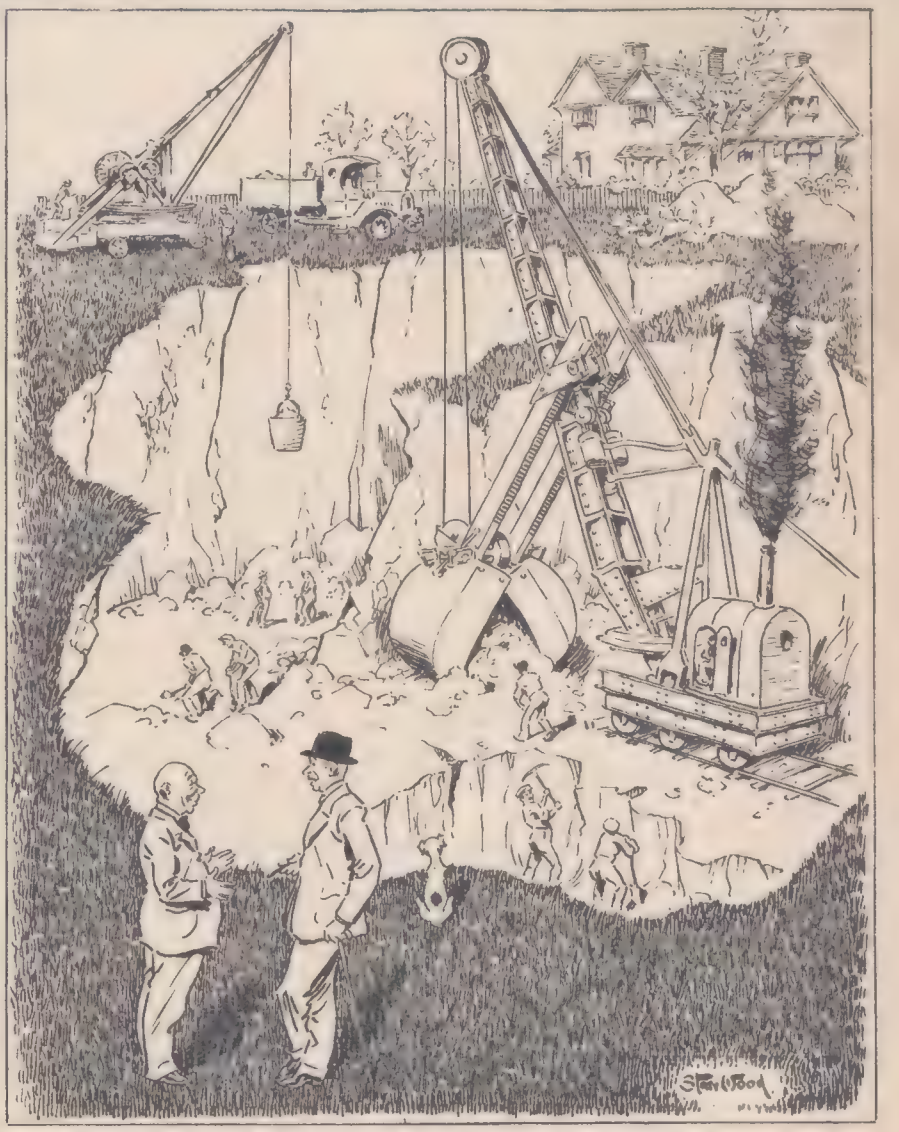
"My wife will be annoyed at my being so late, but I had to wait for a corridor train."



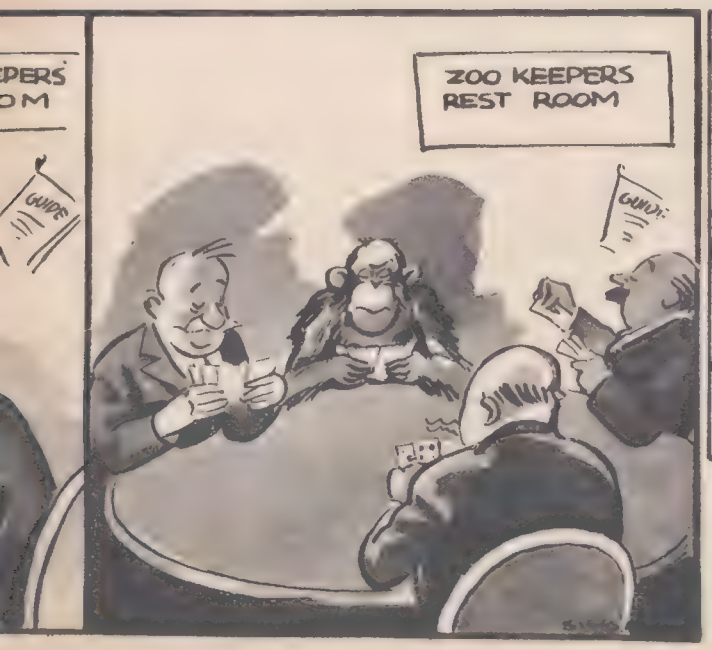
"Fred Astaire said he might drop in."

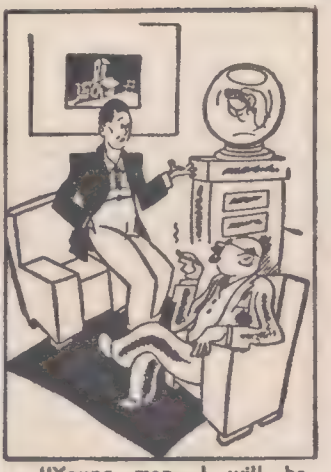
By A. C. BARRETT

"The man that christened her sneezed."



"I started it as a bird bath, but it got away with me."





"Young man, I will be honest. My answer as to whether you may marry my daughter depends on your financial position."

"Strange—my financial position depends on your answer."
—*Die Woche im Bild*, Olten.

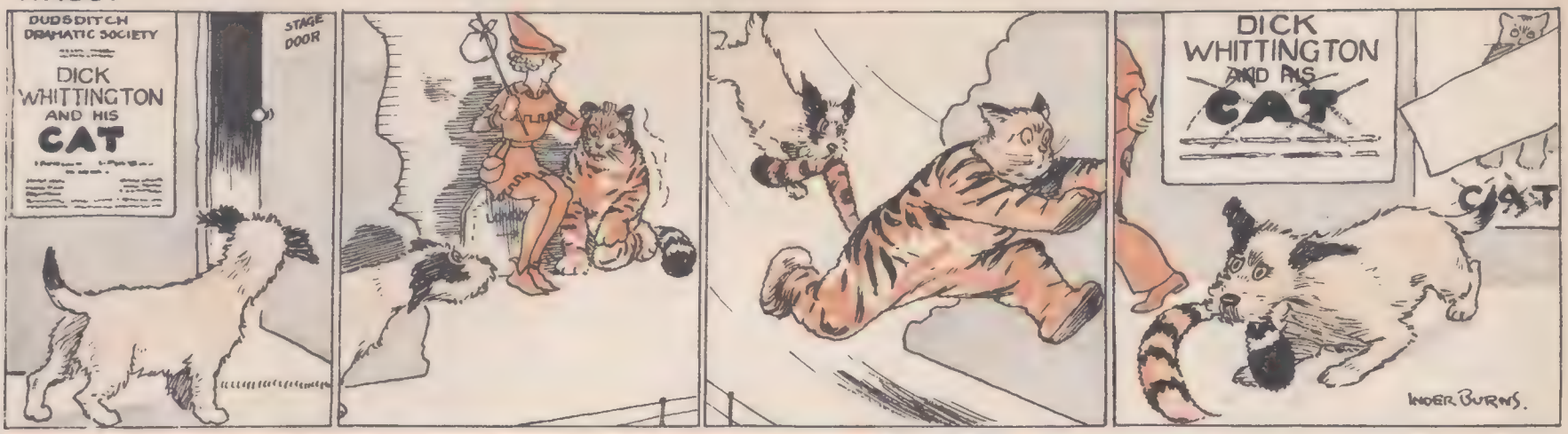
LAUGH WITH THE WORLD

"You opened it for nothing, after all, Dare-devil Dick. It was here all the time on the table in an old sock!"—*Smith's Weekly*, Sydney.

"Sir, to-day I complete fifty years' service with the firm."

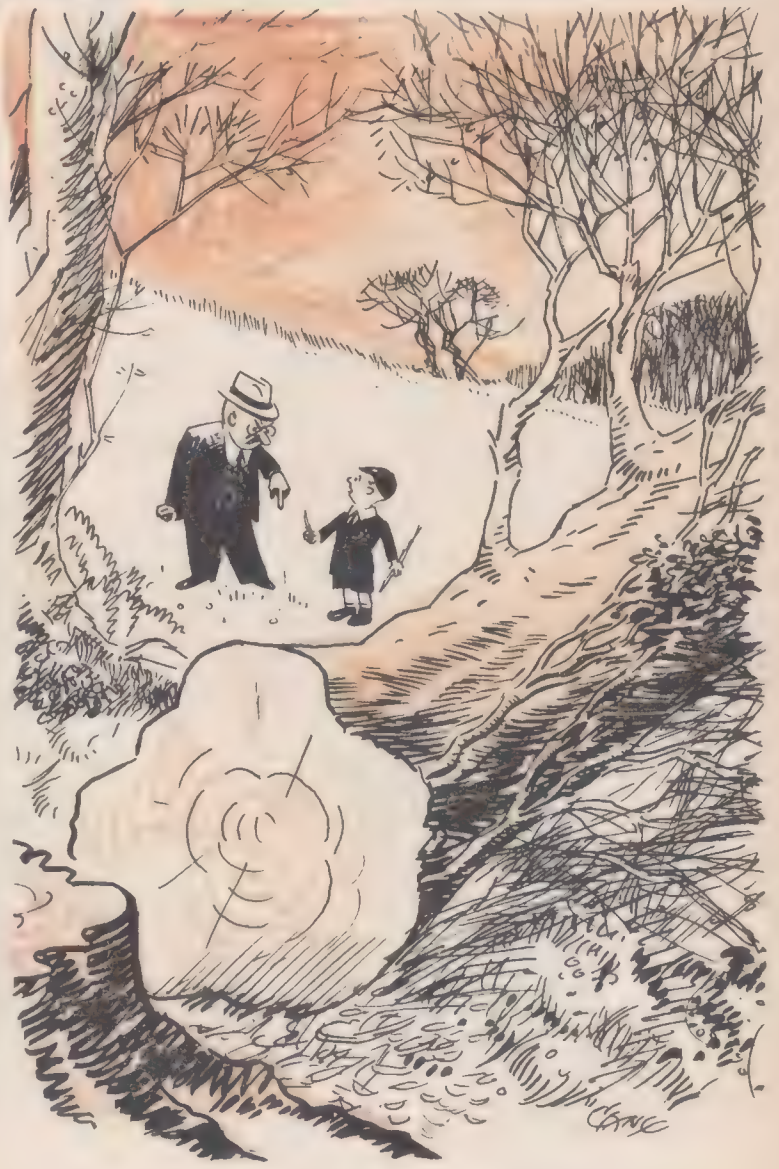
"Yes, but I have never been quite satisfied with you."
—*Das Illustrierte Blatt*, Frankfurt.

WAGGY



MABEL LUCIE ATTWELL Says "WOT A LIFE!"

Oh yes!—I "put on three coats" like it says on the pot
Whenever I paint, I always go faint
co's it's hot!



"I give you a knife—and this is what you do with it!"

OLD BILL and BERT — By BRUCE BAIRNSFATHER

Private Lives

C. R. Attlee

The dog is thankful that the Attlees live outside London.

A MAN *like* ALL *of* US

WITHOUT wearing funny hats, breeding pigs or potatoes, growing his hair long or rolling his R's—can a British politician become a national figure?

Yes. Clement Richard Attlee, aged 52, married, with four children, suburb-dweller, golfer, tennis player, hiker, and motorist, is the new political leader of half this nation.

When in November he was re-elected to the leadership of the Opposition which had polled approximately only two million fewer votes than the "National" Government, people were still asking "Who is Attlee?"

And although he has already created a popular impression of himself which stands for sanity (and normality) his life outside the House of Commons and the political platforms is still unknown even to most of the eight million Labour supporters throughout the country.

His day's work begins at ten and goes on till the House of Commons rises, often well into the small hours of the next morning. As soon as he's finished he slips quietly away and starts off on his long journey home. There is no Rolls Royce with chauffeur waiting for him in Palace Yard, as there is for so many M.P's. He makes straight for the Tube and goes to Oxford Circus where he catches a Green Line 'bus and begins his forty-minute trip to Stanmore.

Why live so far out? The answer is easy to anyone who has a wife and four children to keep on his Parliamentary salary of £400 a year. Not many years ago he used to live even further away. At that time if the House rose after midnight he had to walk the last two miles to his home across the country.

And yet there are people who still say it is easy to be a Member of Parliament.

The 'bus takes him straight to the front door of a typical surburban villa, with a little drive up to it and a Tudor gable over the door. Here he finds his young wife waiting up for him whatever time of the day or night it is. They were married thirteen years ago, when he was thirty-nine.

Small, shy, and with a charming smile, she takes no interest in politics but a lot in her husband. She goes with him to many of his big political functions, but never worries if there are none to go to. For she considers, perhaps a little unusually these days, that the main job of a wife, and especially the wife of a politician, is to keep a nice home for her husband to return to after his work. And in this she succeeds admirably.

If he is back early he will find his children waiting for him too. There are four of them—three girls and a boy, all at school except the youngest.

One of them has the unusual and fascinating name of Felicity Anne. She is the wit of the family and is always making the oddest and sometimes most disconcerting observations on life in general, including her parents. But unfortunately she is growing up, like all children, and the flow of wit will probably cease for a while.

But she won't cease to be of interest to Clem Attlee. For Labour's new leader is essentially a family man. It would not matter whether his children were brilliant or stupid, wicked or good, they would always be of vital interest to him.

He says himself that he has no "new fangled ideas" about how children should be brought up, but neither does he believe in the Victorian method of instilling virtue into them by means of a frequent application of the rod.

If he has any theory on the subject at all it may be summed up in the phrase "a father who understands his children is worth any amount of books on child psychology."

The only other member of the family is the Irish terrier who is perhaps more pleased than anyone that they live a forty-minute 'bus ride from Oxford Circus. For here, out in Stanmore, he can go for endless walks, and the house is right next door to the golf course, which means plenty of open space and no chance of houses being built right on top of Heywood.

Clem Attlee makes good use of the golf course when he is not away on a speaking campaign, and in the summer he gets a fair amount of tennis, as he has a court in his own garden. On wet days his favourite exercise is carpentry, and he does all the rough repairs for his own house.

But what he likes best is to go off for a motor drive. He and his wife make long tours whenever they can, and only last summer they drove down to Devonshire for a holiday. On these trips his wife acts as the chauffeur, and he gets a chance to rest and smoke his pipe for a bit, and enjoy the view and the breeze.

But motoring isn't his only means of locomotion. He is a great walker, and thinks nothing of starting—and finishing—a ten mile walk. When he was working at the Bar in his younger days he used to walk seven miles every day to his office in Lincoln's Inn.

What he really likes is a long walk through the English countryside. He has a tremendous love for every part of England and considerable knowledge of wide stretches of it. There is scarcely a county he has not stayed in, and he knows the different types that come from each one.

But best of all he knows his London. A walk with him through almost any part of London is a revelation, for he can tell the story of a hundred different streets and buildings—and make England's history live in them all.

History and biography are in fact his favourite studies. He is a voracious reader, and on his bookshelves are to be found almost all the English classics. He is particularly fond of the Victorians.

His reading is not all highbrow. When he is on the train going from one meeting to another he likes to keep as far away from politics as possible. The volume that he has in front of him is not "Das Capital" but the latest thriller.

The only trouble about this is that he has read almost all the best thrillers that there are and no one can turn them out fast enough for him, especially as he is very particular as to their quality.

It isn't just enough that they are called "thrillers." They must be written by experts in that very difficult art of detective story writing. And Clem Attlee has some right to say whether they are good stories or not. For he himself is a first-rate story teller. He is for ever collecting new ones, whether he is in the smoking room of the House of Commons or on one of his week-end meetings in the country.

His best collection was acquired when he was on the Simon Commission in India. He spent two years travelling through every part of India, and his wife accompanied him all the time.

Together they saw all the splendours of palaces and temples, and all the magnificence of the East. In company with the other members of the Commission they were entertained by Rajahs and treated as if they themselves were royalty. But all this magnificence made no difference to them.

When it was all over they came back to London and picked up the threads of the quiet and simple family life that they have always lived.

GRAND NEW YEAR PRESENTATION

This week "The Passing Show" offers to every one of its readers a grand New Year Presentation—"The British Encyclopaedia and Dictionary," the most wonderful twelve-volume library of its kind ever published.

The 7,000 pages cover the whole vast field of universal knowledge, and a board of over 100 experts sets upon the work the seal of authority.

Turn right away to pages 19, 20, 21, and 22 and reserve this glorious library to-day.

Continuing TYPIST'S ISLAND

READ THIS FIRST

KAREN WATERSON, a typist, has been persuaded by John Colt, a speculative attorney, to bring a suit for possession of Alakoa, an island in the South Seas. Her claim is based on the fact that her grandfather, Garrett Waterson, who was unaware of her existence, was mentally incompetent when he sold the island to the Waynes.

James Wayne and his three nephews, Ernest, Willard, and Richard, have held and improved the island for twenty years, but realise that their title is not strong.

Richard Wayne, known as Tonga Dick, is a mystery and the black sheep of the family.

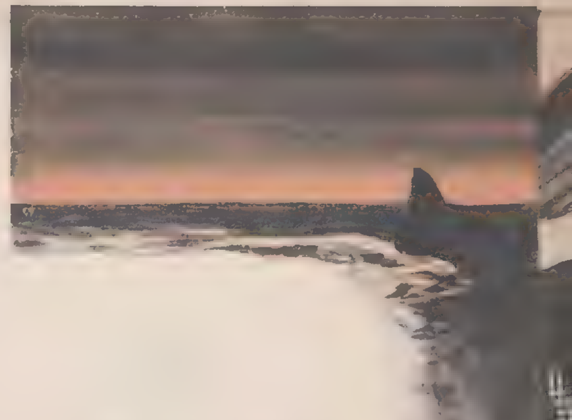
Karen makes Dick's acquaintance and, against her will, he takes her to his uncle's home on Alakoa, where she meets Lilua, a Hawaiian girl. Lilua warns Dick that all is not well on the island.

During the night James Wayne is found dead at his desk. Near the body Dick finds—and destroys—the flowers of a *lei* he had given to Karen. Despite this evidence, he does not believe that she has killed his uncle.

Karen realises that both Dick and John Colt are in love with her.

The Waynes having decided to settle out of court receive a mysterious message which reads: "Make no settlement until I arrive.—Garrett Waterson."

Dick tells Karen that her grandfather is alive, and persuades her to elope with him on the *Holokai*.



● The searchlight picked up the swimmer, now fifty yards back in the *Holokai's* wake.

Lilua *Claims Her* Man

KAREN stood beside Dick Wayne as he piloted the *Holokai* to sea. He was handling the wheel himself, as he always did in these reefs; but even while he was narrowly back-sighting his markers, the sense of her presence there had hold of every part of him, changing the meaning of the vessel, and the harbour, and the night. The salt spray that he loved had never, in all his life, been so welcome in the air he breathed.

The Chinese mess boy poked himself into the wheelhouse and plucked at Dick's sleeve. He was in a white mess jacket, this time.

"Captain Tonga, something is w'ong, I think. Somebody is in your cabin, I think. You send somebody in cabin?"

"Well, who is it?"

"Captain Tonga, the door is fastened."

"Oh, bunk! What's the matter with you? Seeing *akuas*?"

"No, Captain. Somebody is——"

"Go tell the cook to make dinner for two—and make it good. Get out of here and do as I tell you."

The big combers that lashed over the snag-toothed coral were close on the *Holokai's* bows, but Dick seemed sure of his way. He fired the *Holokai* at the channel like a shot; the big Diesel had small range of speed, so that under power the *Holokai* went full out or not at all. He spoke from the side of his mouth to the Japanese who served as first officer, bosun, and coppersmith.

"Inyashi, get the night glasses out of my bunk."

"Yes, Captain."

"We'll very likely sight the *Sarah* coming in—that's your grandfather's other ship," Dick said to Karen, raising his voice over the roar of the shoals. "She's a good little vessel, but much slower than this. She must have started north no more than twelve hours after the *Holokai*, and you see how late she is. Did you know that 'Sarah' was your grandmother's name?"

The Japanese quartermaster was back, bursting into the wheelhouse in the quick nervous way that marked everything he did. "Captain Dick, I cannot get the night glasses—you have left your cabin locked."

"Locked? You're crazy—the door's stuck, that's all. Give it a boot."

Inyashi showed extreme embarrassment. "Captain Dick, I did. The panel split. I think it was poor wood, but I can fix it. It is locked—it is locked, I know."

"Let it go. I'll send up the glasses. Get a kanaka boy for the wheel—we'll be in clear water in a minute. Set a course off Kalae; watch for a ship—any ship—and report all vessels to me."

"Yes, Captain!"

"That last is for you," Dick told Karen. The wheel was kicking crazily, but he let go with one hand, and pulled her close against him. "I thought you might want to see the ship that's bringing him in, out of the south."

"Out of the south," Karen repeated; "out of the sea, out of the past itself . . ."

"You'll like him, Karen; I promise you that."

"You and I have so much to talk about," Karen said. "I'm terribly eager to know more about my grandfather. I want to know where he's been, and what he does, and how he lives. I want to know what he's really like, and if you think he'll approve of me."

"And," Dick said, "why he disappeared, and hid his name?"

"Did he run from something, Dick?"

"Only from his own pride. I understand it; I understand it well. But it's a little hard to explain to quiet people, leading quiet lives."

"Hard to explain?" she repeated. "No, not to me! Even from what little I know of him, I do understand. As if it had been myself!"

He marvelled a little at that. This utterly feminine girl, with her finely chiselled face and gentle small voice, could show flashes of something strangely reminiscent of Garrett Waterson; as if the mountainous and craggy fires of the old adventurer had perpetuated themselves in a thread of fine steel.

"I can tell you most of the rest," he said. "I——"

Dick suddenly spun the wheel hard over, and the *Holokai* yawed as the reef-rollers struck her in the bottle-neck of the entrance; then she steadied upon the easy swell of the open sea.

Almost at once, from the depths beyond the reef rose Kai-Ale-Ale, the incredible whale shark the kanakas called a god; and took up a position to windward of the *Holokai's* thrumming wake.

Inyashi stepped forward, and Dick turned over the wheel. "We can go below now, Karen. I don't think a whisky soda would do us any harm, do you? I have some of the same Scotch the British embassies use. And something to eat?"

As they walked aft Dick Wayne saw Kai-Ale-Ale's incredible fin cutting the water on the *Holokai's* starboard quarter; he hesitated, and almost pointed it out. But he decided that this was no night for dwelling upon monstrous fish. He thumbed his nose at Kai-Ale-Ale, and followed Karen down the ladder.

Below, he moved briskly about the cabin, switching on more lights. "This door back here in the stern is to my own cabin—pretty small, but the only one there is. It's yours while you want it; I can sleep on the settee. But——"

It suddenly occurred to him that this was the first moment in which they had been alone since he had persuaded her to leave the *Seal*. He turned and faced her, his eyes gay. A hundred voyages among the islands of little known seas had brought him less adventure than he believed belonged to him to-night.

For a moment she met his eyes and her smile was shy, misty; he had never seen her in this mood before, with her defences lowered and the keen brilliance of her glance shadowed and softened. "But—but——" He forgot what he had meant to say.

"But what?" she mocked him. "If you mean to suggest——"

She stopped. Abruptly the smile left her face, and the softness, to be replaced by astonishment and an utter disbelief.

After his first split second of surprise he saw that she was looking past him, and he whirled.

The door of the inner cabin had opened, and Lilua was standing there—Lilua, with half-clad body and blazing eyes.

She stood very straight, swaying with effortless balance to the lift and tilt of the sea as only the Polynesians can. She was wearing nothing but a wrapped skirt of tapa cloth—not even a *lei*, or a blossom in her hair to account for the odour of ginger flowers that came subtly into the cabin from the doorway where she stood. The delicate but full modelling of her cream-brown body contradicted the child-like oval of her face; and there was fire in her eyes, and something suggestive of volcano smoke in the pagan bush of her hair about her shoulders. She might have been the daughter of the fire goddess, then.

Lilua spoke straight to Karen; it was as though she could not see Dick at all.

"*What are you doing here?*"

There was appalling silence, filled with the rush of the sea along the ports. "Lilu', this is ridiculous—it's fantastic!"

"You stay out of this, Dick! It isn't your fault—it's this *malahine haole* woman. You can't understand her because you're a man, but I understand her. What she can't steal she'll destroy. She'll eat the soul out of your body, Dick—and then go back to John Colt!"

"Be still!" Dick roared.

"I'll not be still! . . . Send this *wahine* back to her own man. She has no right here. This is not her place. It would be best for you if you gave her to Kai-Ale-Ale—he's waiting for her, following the ship. Then there'd be peace again, like there used to be."

The stark, casual meaning of her words seemed to bring into the cabin a sense of

by ALAN LE MAY

Illustrated by Ronald McLeod

the monstrous, unholy shape that was dogging the *Holokai's* quarter.

Dick angered. "How the devil did you——"

Lilua was speaking to Karen, ignoring him again. Her voice was quiet, in comparison to his; yet somehow it cut his down, so that he stopped.

"This is my man. You know that. Why don't you go back to your own? Do you have to have everything—the land, and the sea, and the fish, and all the men in the world?"

For a moment a terrible exasperation half-blinded Dick Wayne. Something that was worth more to him than the breath in his teeth had been altogether his, until Lilua appeared. She had come abruptly out of no place—unaccountable in her physical presence, but even more unaccountable as a factor in his life. Search his memory as he might, he could not recall ever having summoned her—not by so much as the trailing of his eyes.

"I want to know how you got on to my boat."

"I swam," Lilua tossed at him in a quick, almost contemptuous aside. She went on talking to Karen, levelly, her face quiet except for the flame in her eyes, and her body quiet except for that easy, unconscious sway that balanced her to the lift of the sea.

"You have nothing to give him," Lilua said in that inexorable, steady voice. "You can only think of position, and land, and money. Would you want him if you had first seen him sick, and helpless, and alone? You know your eyes would not have seen him at all. This is my man. If he were dead, I would make myself die. Would you?"

Suddenly Dick was unable to speak. He stood weaponless, humble, and—without any particular recourse or hope. Diffidently he turned his eyes to Karen.

Karen Waterson had gone perfectly white—whiter than sea foam, whiter than the linen of the little hat she wore. Her mouth was oddly distorted, but her eyes were blank. She seemed to have lost all power of motion exactly where she stood. Then the reel of the little ship unbalanced her, and by its very unkindness seemed to return her the gift of movement. Karen turned, literally fled. At the foot of the ladder she flung Dick one irrational, unreadable glance; then ran away from them into the upper night.

Dick Wayne was left facing Lilua alone. For a moment Lilua's eyes remained fixed upon the companionway where Karen had disappeared. Then her eyes turned to Dick, and for a moment they looked at each other.

"Lilu', Lilu'," Dick said, "what have you done to me?"

For one brief moment the sharp, spear-like flames in the eyes of Lilua broke down; she looked at Tonga Dick pathetically, pitifully, with no defence behind her eyes, no barriers at all.

Dick's voice was cool, definite as a rifle shot. "Stop it, you hear me? Forget it—cut it out!"

The girl let the sway of the ship take her, then. She swayed against the doorway's stanchion, and stayed there; her eyes dropped, and her head lowered, and even her breasts, deep and fertile, if anything was deep in Lilua—seemed to take on the aspect of folded flowers.

Dick took the ladder in long, reluctant strides. A glance told him that Karen was in the point of the bow.

He stood a minute by the swaying mainmast, trying to gather himself, but without any effect. Then he walked forward to the rail where Karen stood. Close to her at the rail, he drew her close against his side, easily and naturally; it had always seemed to him that she belonged nowhere else but there.

"Karen——"

She took herself away from him sharply—out of the curve of his arm, out of contact with him in more ways than one; and they stood alone, as individual as the unrelated stars.

"Karen," Dick said, "I guess you were right; I don't know how you knew, but you knew. In a way, you foretold this, Karen."

"Perhaps," Karen said, "it's better for both of us that this happened just as it did."

That stopped him for a moment but he came on again. "What are you saying? In God's name, up helm! Do I mean so little to you——"

"Whatever you may mean to me, it seems that you have made yourself mean more to this—this kanaka."

"Karen, it's grotesque that a native brat——"

"A brat is a child, Dick. This girl is anything but a child."

"What does it matter what she is? If you and I——"

"Perhaps it matters everything what she is. Perhaps—she's what you made her. I don't know how old she is. But that's a woman, Dick. If you've made her your own, as it seems you have——"

Her words died in her throat; but she had said enough.

For a moment then Tonga Dick Wayne faltered. The cool chiselled lines of Karen Waterson seemed infinitely far away. For a moment he was able to hope—even to believe—that he could put her out of his mind, out of his heart. For a little while this girl had become to him like a dream of the stars—but a dream that he would have been glad to forget.

Partly he could see her as she literally was—there was no doubt about that. He could see her as a thin-bodied, thin-faced San Francisco stenographer, sharp-edged in mind and manner because any girl needs to be, making her own way. He could see her in the light of the reason that she was here—in a short-cutting little adventuress, willingly lending herself to the predaceous brain of John Colt in the hunt for unearned fortune. A girl proud without background, arrogant without attainment. . . .

But still behind that, like a mist-figure seen beyond steel cogs and wheels, hovered persistently his own conception of what this girl might have been—perhaps still could be. He was obsessed by the haunting belief that if what he had hunted for always was not in this girl, then it was somehow lost out of the world entirely. Her face lingered in his dreams, and even the rhythm of her walk left him unaccountably shaken.

"And now," Karen said, "I think you might put back to Alakoa—don't you? Because you said——"

"No," Dick answered.

"I ask you to turn back."

"I'm not going to put back. At least not yet. Not until you come to your senses, Karen."

He didn't know why he told her that. The impulse was jerking at him to do as she said, and take himself well out of this thing for ever; to turn back to John Colt, and be rid of her once and for all. He could see Lilua's steady eyes—and no man could ever forget what she had said. He honestly supposed that it would have been better for him to relax into the world of Lilua—to lose himself by day in the casual adventures of the warm sea, and by night in the arms of an island woman who doubted nothing, asked nothing—could be well-content with food and a man. But—something stubborn within him held on.

Karen said incisively, "You promised you'd turn back if I asked."

"Not yet. Later, if you want. Not yet."

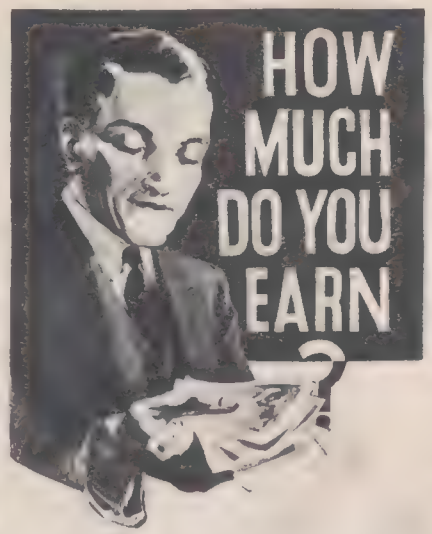
He had given up ever hearing an expression from her again, before she spoke.

"I guess——" she said, "I guess, Dick, I don't blame you."

Of all things on earth, he had least expected to hear that. Inanely he said, "Again, please?"

"Men are what they are," Karen said, her voice somehow distant, yet not unfriendly, "and women are what they

(*Continued overleaf*)



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Continuing

Lilua *Claims Her* Man

are. People who hunt for the absolute are fools."

"Always?"

"Oh, yes; always. But maybe I'm a fool, too. I think——" Her tone wavered, but steadied again. "I think—maybe you'd better go on. Go on to Hilo—and give me a little time. We'll still come out, Dick, I think."

"Listen," Dick said. "I want you to have this decently straight. I give you my word—and I wouldn't offer proof if I could—I never made love to this girl in my life, never laid a hand on her."

"No?"

He didn't even bother to answer that; he knew what to expect from this girl by now. He held on still because to him only one adventure was conceivable, and that adventure was Karen—literally, for she was more than an epitome: she was the adventure itself.

"I don't see why——" Karen began. The rushing sound of the *Holokai* through the uneven sea seemed to come between them again, so that he never knew what she had started to say.

Suddenly he turned, and shouted for Inyashi; the little Japanese came running along the deck.

"Get—get ready to put about."

"Yes, Captain."

Almost at once the voice of the ship altered, slacking off and quieting.

"So," Karen said, "it was *you* who changed your mind, after all!"

Dick said thickly, "You're going to have to believe the truth when I tell it to you."

"Either," she said, "I'll take you as you really are, or I'll never take you at all."

"You'll never take me, or I you," Dick said harshly, "on the basis of any such lie as is in your mind."

"The Polynesians are known everywhere as a mild, easy-going race. Am I supposed to think that this kanaka woman, without any encouragement or any past relationship with you, suddenly runs wild, and goes to passionate, extreme lengths——"

"Lilua is not all Polynesian, Karen."

"I have no doubt she's a little of everything."

He was silent.

"She's beautiful, Dick," Karen said. "I can see that. I can even imagine, in a kind of queer, left-handed way, how such a body must look to a man. But I hate her, Dick. When I look at the dark, coppery colour of her skin, and think of you touching her—it seems to me that I can never look at a brown skin again without——"

"Stop it! You don't know what you're saying."

"Well, she *is* of a different colour."

"Karen—that girl is your cousin."

A few seconds passed while she comprehended that; then she whirled sharply toward him. "You mean to tell me——"

"You wondered why Lilu' has charge of the whole house on Alakoa? You wondered if there wasn't a special answer to that? Well, now you know the right answer. Lilu' is Garrett Waterson's granddaughter—just the same as you."

He faced her squarely. Her whole body seemed to have gone tense, but for the moment she was unable to speak; and he never found out what she would have asked him first.

From within the ship issued a thin, small, and somehow distant sound—unrecognisable and inarticulate, but so thoroughly unaccountable in the ordinary world of reality that every figure upon the deck of the *Holokai* was instantly struck motionless. They were waiting to hear if that sound should come again, once more cutting through the labouring of the little ship, and the great, persistent rush and wallop of the sea.

It did not come again; but after a moment Dick knew that what he had heard was a woman's terrified scream.

It was Dick himself who burst into action. He raced aft, sprang into the ladder well, and in a second more was in the main cabin, where he, and Karen, and Lilua had faced each other such a little while ago; and here he stood, for a moment balancing to the sea. . . .

He didn't see her at first. That cabin, deep, but narrow as the little ship, seemed strangely empty; he had paced alone here a thousand times, without ever sensing the utter vacancy that was here now. The door of his little cabin, wedged into the stern, was flapping loosely against its latch—swinging half open, then banging shut again without catching, with the perversity of all doors. He sprang the the length of the cabin with a furious activity; and booted that door into its wall-catch, once and for all; but there was no one in the cramped stall where he usually slept.

Then, turning, he saw her; and was instantly by her side. Lilua lay in a little crumpled heap at the end of the table, and half under it. He had seen death many times; but it seemed to him now that he had never seen anyone so utterly lifeless, so completely slumped into an unutterable oblivion, as Lilua's form seemed there, dropped like seaweed left on the beach.

He picked her up in his arms—gently as he could, but so handicapped by the *Holokai's* roll that he cursed the helmsman for not holding the vessel steadier into the seas. She seemed terribly little—without weight, without half the substance he would have supposed. But the utter limpness of her body made the lifting of it awkward, for she kept pouring through his arms, almost as if he were trying to lift a wave of the sea.

He got her down on to his own bunk at last. He kissed her mouth as he laid her down, then sought the source of the blood that was staining his shirt, and the bunk upon which he had placed her. There was a knife wound under Lilua's left breast—how deep he could not tell. He snatched cotton from an emergency cabinet nailed to the wall, and crammed it deep into the wound. She stiffened convulsively when he did that. It was his first intimation that she was alive.

He tucked a blanket over her tightly, so that she would not be rolled by the *Holokai's* pitch, and stepped to the door. The Chinese mess boy had appeared uncertainly from the pantry; Dick seized him, and pulled him into the bunk room.

"Has anyone gone out of here through the galley?"

"No, sir."

"This girl has been hurt—stabbed. You stay here with her—do anything you can for her, until I get back."

The face of the Chinese was staring with confusion and alarm. Very probably he had never seen the girl before in his life, and now supposed that Dick himself had done her in. He remained silent, however, and stayed where he was told.

Inyashi slid down the hand rail and landed at the foot of the ladder as Dick turned.

"Someone was knifed here a minute ago," Dick told him, "when you heard that scream. Has anyone come up the ladder since then?"

"No, Captain Dick. But there's a man standing by the taff-rail He acts queer—maybe he is the one. He stands naked by the rail and looks at the sea, and the crew is afraid to go near him. Maybe he came up from here by the skylight?"

Dick snatched a rifle from a rack upon the forward bulkhead. "That's it! Who is he—do you know him?"

"It's that big new kanaka."

"I hired no new kanaka!"

"He came over the side out of the water, just before we sailed; he said you sent him. His name is Hokano, I think."

Dick seized Inyashi and pushed him up the ladder. "Stop your engines," he ordered, following close on Inyashi's heels.

"Full astern?"

"No! If you do that the propellers will catch him as he jumps. Man the dinghy with the four kanaka boys, and lower away."

Emerging on the deck, Dick saw at once the immensely tall, broad-shouldered figure of Hokano standing against the rail in the extreme stern. Hokano faced the sea, motionless as a mast. The tall figure was no more than twenty-five feet away, and for a moment Dick was strongly tempted to try bringing down Hokano with the butt of his rifle. He gave up that idea; even if he succeeded in felling the big kanaka before Hokano could leap into the sea, the stunned man would be extremely likely to slither over the rail and sink like a plummet.

"Kamaku! Roll the searchlight out!"

Karen was at his elbow, her face white and frightened.

"What is it? What's happened?"

"Lilua's lover has come after her—and got her," Dick said.

"She's killed?"

"Probably."

Her eyes were on the rifle in his hands. "What are you going to do?"

"Going to call a policeman," he snapped at her. "Get that boat over! What are you waiting for?"

Now the Diesel quit, so that the *Holokai* seemed suddenly silent. The rush of the water at her bows diminished as she lost way.

As if awakened by the shutting down of the power, the motionless figure in the stern came to life abruptly. Hokano sprang lightly on to the rail itself, and for a moment poised upright. Then he launched into the night in a beautiful clean arc, arms outspread, turning downward to disappear almost silently into the black water.

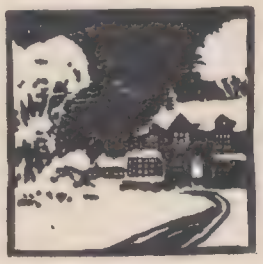
Now the big searchlight came trundling out on its unwieldy tripod. In a moment more it began to sweep the surface of the sea, searching for the place where the swimmer would come up. The *Holokai's* dinghy took to the water

(*Continued on page 30*)

Country Cameos

By S. L. Bensusan

PLEAS *for* WINTER



I DISLIKE the winter so heartily that I have been thinking of the things that may be said in its favour. A distinguished landscape painter has assured me that deciduous trees are far more beautiful at this season than at any other. "For beauty of outline," he says, "you must have bare boughs; a landscape under the snow is one of the finest pictures that Nature can paint; it is so infinitely reposeful."

"There's this to be said for winter," says the Local Authority; "it reduces labour. There are no weeds to fight in the garden and you have a little leisure for planning and planting."

"Anything else?" I enquired.

"Yes, there are no flies, no wasps, no earwigs. Then again there are big log fires to sit by and a room without a fire is never quite at its best."

"Over and above these things," I queried.

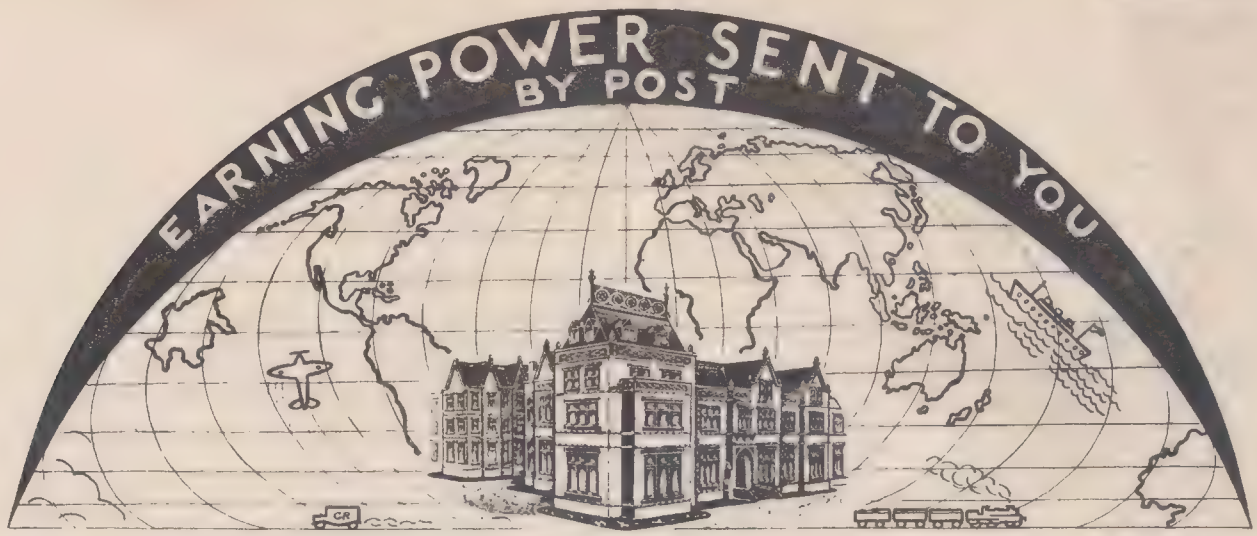
"Yes," she replied. "Christmas roses, winter jasmine, winter aconite and all the colour that you get from the greenhouse, chrysanthemums, cinerarias, cyclamen. A single flowerpot holds as much thrill as a garden bed in summer. When you have more than you can really enjoy, you feel you have no right to so much; in winter you can be properly grateful for a very little."

"What about snow, hail, high wind or fog," I inquired.

"They all make you grateful for a comfortable armchair by a blazing fire. Then again if it were not for a long spell of winter, you'd never get the thrill from spring."

It was suggested further that a fine day in winter, and such things are known, is even more pleasant than a fine summer day because it has the quality of the unexpected, while we take the summer's gifts for granted and are even known to complain if they are given too lavishly.

In so far as we must accept winter whether we like it or not, there may be something to say for these contentions, but there are times when I reflect upon the happy lot of the dormouse, the hedgehog, the squirrel and the bat; there is so much that is desirable in hibernation.



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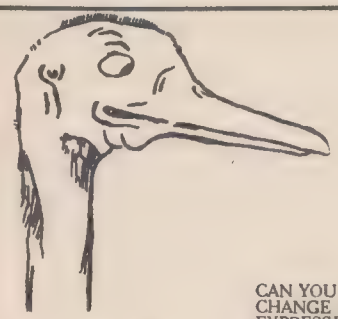

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Continuing

Lilua *Claims Her* Man

flounderingly, and immediately shot astern.

Dick said to Karen, "I knew he was going to do that." He walked aft without hurry, and took his place at the rail where Hokano had stood. "There wasn't any way to stop him. He'll be easier to handle in the water."

The searchlight picked up the swimmer now, fifty yards back in the *Holokai's* wake. In moments when the waves favoured, those on the deck of the vessel could glimpse a flash of wet shoulders, but nothing else. Hokano was swimming face down, taking advantage of the seas like a seal. The *Holokai* had lost steerage way, and was rolling sickly in the swells. Dick braced a knee against the rail and brought his rifle up.

Karen cried out, "Would you shoot him in the water?"

"Do you expect me to wait until he jumps into the air?"

He fired, and a spout of water sprang up far to the left of Hokano. Karen saw now what Dick was firing at. The tall fin of Kai-Ale-Ale was curving near, gliding lazily, unhurried. Dick fired again, without effect; he could not see his sights. Karen's teeth were chattering. "I thought—I thought you said sharks never harm brown men."

"This thing isn't like other sharks! Nobody knows anything about him."

The incredibly long, monstrous shape or Kai-Ale-Ale was snouting near to the swimmer now; Hokano must have seen it, but he swam straight on, unmindful. The boy manning the searchlight suddenly swung it aside, and held it unsteadily upon the monster. A long phosphorescent gleam of turned water suddenly shone half the length of the whale shark's back, emphasising the unbelievable.

Dick sighted upon the base of the great fin and fired four times. Suddenly the fin jerked rigid, and a great spout of water went up. The fin sunk from view; far back, incredibly far back from where it disappeared, the great tail fluke rose out of the sea. For a moment the searchlight held it—a vast scimitar shaped thing, higher from the water than the *Holokai's* booms; then it drove downward, disappearing in black water as Kai-Ale-Ale sounded.

"Stay down there a while," Dick said.

"Did you kill it?"

"You can't kill that thing."

The searchlight found the boat again. It was rising and falling idly, and its bow rose clear of the water as the kanakas hauled in the slack body of Hokano.

Hokano, that tall unhappy man who had tried to end Lilua's life and his own, presently lay bound with wet cordage in a foc'sle bunk. One of his brother kanakas had bashed him over the head with an oar, as Hokano had turned, treading water, to look at Kai-Ale-Ale.

Tonga Dick Wayne had been right in sending a kanaka crew in the boat to pick up Hokano; the maxim of South Sea sailors was true—that no one knew how to handle a kanaka except a kanaka. Hokano, naked though he looked, had his knife slung about his neck by a sennet cord, and he would have slashed the wrist tendons of anyone who laid hands on him from the boat while he was conscious. After one of them had knocked him out with an oar, another kanaka had dived to rescue him, and had stopped the sinking of the inert form at three fathoms.

Bound with cords that cut too deep ever to slip, Hokano lay in a foc'sle bunk, awake and impassive. Aft, in Dick Wayne's bed, lay the girl Hokano had tried to kill, fighting for her life; the intense native vitality of Lilua's body held on to life avidly, regardless of how little Lilua herself cared whether she lived or died.

Karen Waterson sat beside Lilua, and Inyashi and the Chinese mess boy hovered behind Karen, useful chiefly to hold Lilua down when she could no longer be controlled. Lilua was not out of her head entirely; she babbled unceasingly in the Hawaiian tongue. Dick went away unable to listen any more; Lilua was talking as if her heart would break and kill her if her wound did not.

He went on deck and stood at the stern swaying to a sea he did not feel. The *Holokai* when full out had always had the character of a crazed animal, able to drive across the surface of the sea like a thing possessed, knocking the swells into spume; but it seemed to Dick now that she wallowed like a slug, getting no pace. His whole soul was trying to jerk the *Holokai* out of the cling of the seal. He would have liked to lift her and throw her through space, and bring her against the beach of Alakoa like the thrust of a knife.

He was standing there, watching what seemed to him the slug-like process of the straining *Holokai*, when Karen came to his side.

"I'm sorry," Karen said. "I'm terribly sorry. Dick, this has been a thing such as I have never seen."

Dick said in a muffled way, "You don't know what you're saying. How would you know?"

"Dick," Karen said, "I should never have come to Alakoa. I bring nobody anything but sorrow, and trouble, and death."

"Yes," said Dick brutally.

"I think," Karen said, "if it hadn't been for this mongrel girl, it would have been all right. We're an awfully long way apart, I guess; but—except for her—I think you and I would have got together, in the end."

"That girl knew what it was to love something," he said.

It required a conscious effort of Karen's mind to know what girl he meant; but when she had done that she was ready for what he said next, even before he said it. "Without demanding anything, without ever any question, or any terms. None of this everlasting doubt, and wavering, and indecision. Once and for all, she gave everything she had, and asked for nothing."

"I suppose you mean," Karen said, "that this half-caste girl, this cousin of mine, as you say——"

"It matters a lot to you, doesn't it," Dick said bitterly, "exactly who this girl is? I would rather ask a woman what she thinks and feels, than who she is."

"And so," Karen said, with something like a tone of despair, "if a brown woman, or a black woman, can let herself go, more fully than I can, your answer is——?"

"Karen," Dick said, "if ever any woman has to ask herself if she loves a man, the answer is 'No'."

The stubborn silence that fell between them then was broken—very gratefully for them both—by the impetuous projection of Inyashi between them. It always seemed that whatever Inyashi did was high-pressured, and sudden.

"Captain Dick, a vessel is coming in; she's three points off the quarter, now. I think it may be the boat you look for. Hard to tell yet from just the lights."

"All right," Dick said. "When we've anchored I'll go out and pilot her in."

When Inyashi had moved away, Dick and Karen stood silent for a little while. When Karen spoke it was apparent that she was steadier, better poised than he.

"Can't you be fair to me?" she said. "Can't you be honest? If you and I can't be frank and honest with each other, who in the world can?"

"Honest?"

"You haven't always been honest with me, Dick. If you had told me at the first that Garrett Waterson was alive——"

"More honest, I think, than you with me."

"I can't imagine what you mean."

"You've played your hand alone—or else with John Colt; never with me. I've protected you in situations that you tried to conceal from me altogether."

"Protected? What situations?"

"What would have happened to your claim on Alakoa if you had been held on suspicion of murder?"

Karen's astonished eyes jerked to his face. "Murder?" she gasped. "What on earth are you talking about?"

"What do you think my brothers would have done if they had found out that you were with James Wayne when he died?"

"But—but——"

"Oh, I know that you didn't mean to harm him. Even without the—call it excitement—of seeing you, I dare say he wouldn't have lasted another twenty-four hours. But you know how Willard and Ernest would have seized upon the fact that you were with him—and sought to conceal it. The investigation would have been an ugly and uncomfortable thing."

"I with him?" Karen repeated incredulously. "Why, Dick——"

"You see," Dick said, "you're not honest with me even yet. Who did you think picked up the broken *lei*? Tsura? Dear God! I'll never smell ginger flowers again without remembering——"

"*Lei*? What *lei*?"

"The *lei* I gave you, that I brought to your room, the night my uncle died. The *lei* that you wore when you went to see him. The *lei* that broke, and still lay scattered all over the floor when I found him sitting there, dead."

"You mean—you mean—you've thought all this time——"

"I picked up the *lei*; I opened the windows, and let the wind sweep away the smell of ginger flowers, and said nothing. I even respected your own silence, and said nothing to you."

"I think," Karen said, "I could have forgiven anything in the world but that. This is too much, Dick."

"You see," Dick said, "I believed in you—I believed in you as I haven't believed in anything since I can remember. God help me, I believe in you yet! But I can't any longer believe that you are for me."

"No," Karen said, her voice strange and shaky, "not for you. Never for you again."

"Again? Hell, you never were!"

"When you came for me, and I ran away with you, from the *Seal*, I belonged to you as much as I'll ever belong to anybody. More, perhaps. Even when your—when Lilua turned up in your cabin, in that savage, half-naked rig, I was disgusted and hurt, but I would have got over it, I think. Only—I didn't know you then."

"You think you know me now?"

"As well as I ever care to, Dick."

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WOMAN to WOMAN

The newest job for women is that of hostess to a big block of modern flats. Salaries vary round £200 a year, and the hostesses are provided with a flat, rent free, in the block.

The scheme for women flat hostesses is spreading in London and already starting in the provinces. Here is one of them explaining the job from all its angles.

Told by Mrs. Gallogly to Mary Benedetta

I am a FLAT

I SUPPOSE I like being a flat hostess because I am deeply interested in human nature. This job would never do for anyone who did not like her fellow creatures.

In some blocks of flats we are called "hostesses," but other firms (like mine) give us a more business-like name and call us "branch managers." I myself work for some very big property owners, and out of eighteen branch managers only four of us are women.

Some of the London flat hostesses only have one block in their care. For instance, Lady MacArthur looks after a big block of a hundred and fifty luxurious flats in Mayfair. People there go in and out of a hall where the walls and floor are white marble. The carpet is thick and beautiful and there are huge coloured mirrors with banks of real flowers in front of them.

Lady MacArthur is provided with a lovely flat of her own on the ground floor, and she works hard all day receiving new tenants and looking after the old ones. Those are service flats and she has to keep an eye on the menus and see that even the most critical tenant is satisfied.

But although she lives in a world of such tremendous luxury I think I would rather choose my life than hers. My tenants are distributed in many more different walks of life, and they are probably much more varied in character; all of which makes my job more interesting.

I have charge of three big blocks of flats, one at Chiswick, one at Ealing and the largest at Kew. This makes a total of two hundred and fifty flats, so you can imagine I am kept pretty busy.

My own flat is on the Kew property, but not actually in the block. Before the flats were built there was a picturesque old cottage on the estate. It was several hundred years old and quite a famous landmark in Kew. Instead of pulling it down the builders modernised it and made the bottom floor into offices. The top floor is now my flat, so that when I "go to the office" I only have to go downstairs.

They had to alter an old fireplace at the back of the cottage, and they took away the back attics to heighten the ceilings in the upstair rooms. Otherwise the front is just the same, and I am quite proud of my little old-world cottage-flat.

Mine is no sinecure, but I am genuinely fond of my job. Sometimes people say, "Of course, you're wonderfully lucky, having a job like that, with a free flat and a good salary, and nothing to do except be charming to people." I often wish I could make them "take over" for a week just to show them that it is not as easy as all that.

To begin with I am always "on the spot." Although my duties are officially over when the office closes I cannot turn a deaf ear to the telephone. Sometimes business people, who have been working hard in the City, want to come and look at some flats after they have been home and had dinner. They have to make an appointment with me beforehand, and in many cases it is the only time they can come.

If a tenant's pipe bursts, or anything unforseen happens, they immediately get on to me. Once I had to get up in the night and go and take a woman's temperature. Her husband was in such a state about her that he rang me up, and when I got there she had no temperature at all. As far as I could make out she had only eaten something that had disagreed with her!

I have to make a point of going all over the other two blocks of flats at least two or three times a week, and of course, they are always able to get in touch with me by telephone. If there are decorations going on I have to go more often, and when there are any repairs in hand I am supposed to go and see them every day.

With the three blocks of flats I have a competent team of workmen to carry out all our repairs, and also do the decorating. There is a foreman, a plumber, carpenter, electrician and about ten labourers. Then each block has three porters, a porter-stoker, and a cleaner to keep the staircase clean.

I have to look after all these people, pay their wages, and settle when and where they are to do the jobs. But I leave the foreman to choose any new workmen and see they do their jobs properly.

In connection with the letting there is a tremendous amount of correspondence, and I have one typist who helps me with it and looks after the telephone.

Besides doing all the repairs and decorations for which the landlords are responsible, these workmen do jobs for the inmates. Tenants can save money

"Showing prospective tenants over the flats is always an interesting task . . ."

HOSTESS

by using our workmen as we can do their jobs very much cheaper for them than an outside firm.

Showing prospective tenants over the flats is always an interesting task, and I think that women do it better than men. They can appreciate all the more detailed household problems, and they see reason over little things that a man thinks are just fads.

I shall never forget what happened one time I was showing someone round. It was fairly late in the evening, and I was taking a young business man over a certain flat which I thought would suit him nicely.

While we went up to it I was talking to him about the flat, telling him how nice it was. Directly we opened the door we found the whole place flooded. Some pipe had gone wrong in the bathroom and, the flat underneath being empty as well, no one had noticed anything was wrong. Otherwise the people beneath would have seen it leaking through their ceiling.

It was such an anti-climax that we both burst out laughing. He was very good about it because he insisted on helping me mop up the mess. We fetched every cloth and bucket we could find, and there we both were, hard at it for about half an hour. The amazing part was he took the flat!

When I started it was firmly impressed on me that my first thought must be to see that all the tenants were happy. So I try to carry this out as far as possible. Even if it means doing extra little things for them we find it worth it in the end because then they recommend us.

One day a dear old lady who lives alone here came to me almost in tears because some smuts had spoilt her nice white kitchen ceiling. It was really her own affair and something she should have had attended to herself, but when I saw how upset she was I decided I must take it in hand.

After all, when I came to work it out I could have it done for her by our own workmen and it would be a case of the cost of our workmen's time against her happiness. And it was worth it. I had her ceiling re-done at our own expense, and she was thoroughly pleased and happy.

Another thing I find makes such a difference to the tenants, is that if for any reason they are not satisfied with their flat, we undertake to move them into another either in the same block or in another block somewhere else. They may suddenly decide they want a larger flat, or the husband may be moved in his work so that another part of London would be more convenient for them.

Whatever it is we put it right for them, and they never have the worry of having two flats on their hands. Also it makes them feel happier about signing a lease when they know they are not sentencing themselves to the same flat for the whole period.

Playing box and cox like this with the flats and their tenants makes life a bit hectic at times, but we always seem to get them happily settled quite quickly.

Once a month I have to go to a meeting of all the branch managers and the people in control of all the properties. Then we compare notes, and if any complaint comes up from several directions the owners make a note of it and it probably means some big change in the next block of flats they put up.

Some of the nicest tenants are the elderly retired people who come to settle down and lead a quiet life. They are generally the easiest to please. People who are used to big houses in the country, and have had to leave them for economic reasons, often come looking for things to complain about. But they usually settle down after a while.

The most difficult tenants of all are the young married couples. They generally want far more than we can give them, and the young wife is apt to throw her weight about rather. Perhaps it is a kind of reaction after leaving their parents, but they always want to persuade us that they know everything. Some of them, of course, are just the opposite and as charming as can be.

Apart from all my hundred-and-one recognised tasks I find myself taking on all kinds of quaint new duties. For instance, some of our flats are occupied by two girls sharing a flat together. They may be out at work all day, and I am often entrusted with messages to their young men friends, who are told to ring *me* up instead of ringing them up at their work.

Also not all our tenants are on the telephone, and I have to take messages for the ones who have no telephone of their own.

At the moment there is no special stated training necessary to become a flat hostess. They want young women with a good business sense and plenty of tact and charm, with an endless amount of patience.

I began my career as a typist in a big firm of brewers where I worked for five years. Then I went to the firm who own these flats and worked as a typist in their letting office. After two years they began giving me more and more responsibilities, until they made me a branch manager and put me in charge of my present three blocks of flats.

My husband is in a big electrical firm and I have a young son of eleven who is just the world to me. He understands as much about leases and dilapidations as I do, so I am hoping that one day he will become a big estate manager.

That is one of my very few day dreams —I do not have time for many.

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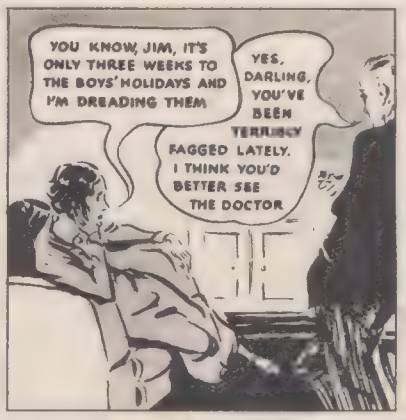
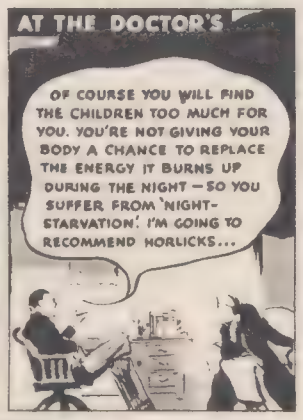
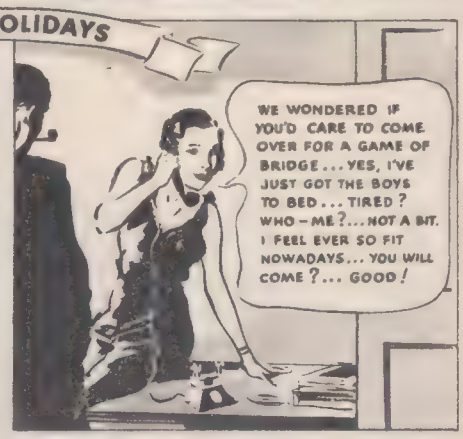






Do you find your children a strain sometimes?

Do you sometimes wake up so tired that you long for an extra servant? Probably you are suffering from "Night-Starvation." The reason you wake up tired is that your body has been burning up energy all night long, and has not had enough nourishment to replace it. So you are "Night-Starved," and have no reserves of energy during the day.

Horlick's regularly at bed-time guards against "Night-Starvation" — it replaces the burnt-up energy while you sleep. You wake every morning with new reserves of vitality and vigour. You will enjoy taking Horlick's, and it is economical too — the milk is in it, add water only. Prices from 2/-. Also the Horlick's Mixer, 6d. and 1/-.

HORLICK'S GUARDS AGAINST NIGHT-STARVATION

THIS MEANS YOU SLEEP SOUNDLY, WAKE REFRESHED, AND HAVE EXTRA ENERGY ALL DAY

The MAGIC Typewriter

I AM an author, which means that I have chosen the hardest method of making a living in the world. I often wonder, as I watch some fellow traveller idly scan the pages of a magazine he has purchased to while away the tedium of a train journey, if he has any real idea of the brain flogging that has gone to make up one of those apparently lightly written, easy flowing stories. It can be taken as a certainty that the more easily the story runs, the harder the work.

As I have tried to make plain, "the road to the stars" is a hard one, and there are many steps to climb before a professional writer of fiction and other work can consider himself established. One of the most encouraging things that can happen is to be commissioned by the editor of a popular publication to write a "series."

I had been fortunate enough to have an idea of mine find favour with the editor of a well-known monthly and was naturally delighted when he asked me to submit a series of ten stories along similar lines. He did not guarantee acceptance. I was not, at that time, in a position to demand that; instead, he told me frankly that the continuation of the series depended entirely upon my keeping up to the level of the first two or three efforts.

For a time everything went swimmingly. Spurred on by success, I was writing better than ever before in my life, while it seemed as if the incidents for each new story were coming from a ceaselessly flowing stream safely tucked away at the back of my brain, and then, not suddenly, but gradually as a spring dries up in a drought, the continuation of new ideas began to slacken.

Perhaps I had been driving myself too hard, or it may have been due to concentrating too much along one line. Whatever the reason, there came an unforgettable occasion when I sat before my typewriter, idle and helpless. A clean sheet of paper stared back challengingly from the carrier of the machine. On it I had already typed out a title with my name underneath, but beyond that nothing, and, flog my brain as I would, nothing would come.

Like most of my fellow craftsmen, it is my usual habit to think and rough out the idea for a story before settling down to the final draft, but occasionally, when ideas are elusive, I find it helps to stick down a good title and just carry on in the hope that the plot will, to a certain extent, form itself. This method usually entails the re-writing of the first few pages, but it is much better than sitting idle.

Alas, I had now reached a stage when even this plan failed me. The title, a good one, was there; underneath my name stood bravely, beyond that, not a word, and strain my brain as I would, not a word could I type.

For hours I sat with my head in my hands, thinking and thinking, but the door seemed locked and my fiercest mental efforts failed to slip the catch.

Once or twice my wife slipped unobtrusively into my study to ask if I wanted a meal or some light refreshment, but always I waved her impatiently away. Used to my writing moods, she departed as silently as she had entered.

If an author's lot is a hard one, the life of an author's wife must be a thousand times harder; we are, I suppose, the most temperamental crowd on earth and the unfortunate woman who has to put up with our manifold moods and lightning changes deserves a deal more sympathy than she is ever likely to obtain.

I had been exceedingly lucky in my marriage. Kate was, and is, the ideal wife for a writer. Herself the daughter of a prominent journalist, she understands the difficulties of creative work and the demands it makes on the nerves and temper of the worker. Also she has always been passionately fond of reading and is a much better critic than some people I know who have made big reputations in that direction. Much better. Those last two words come from the heart.

Viciously, although undoubtedly foolishly, refusing to be beaten, I sat and thought the hours away, picking up and discarding plot after plot until my brain was in a whirl. It was useless; not a decent idea could I get, until at last I was forced to recognise that, for the present at least, I was beaten.

Now it is a very curious thing how often sleep will come to the aid of a mind in difficulty. As far as myself is concerned I have frequently noticed that to go to bed on a tough problem is the best way out. Whether it is that the subconscious mind comes to the aid of the sleeper or that some force of which we know nothing takes up and untangles our muddled skeins, I do not know.

I have proved, again and again, when faced by an apparently unsolvable proposition, that the first awakening has coincided with the opening of a hidden door whose existence had not ever been suspected at the time of going to sleep.

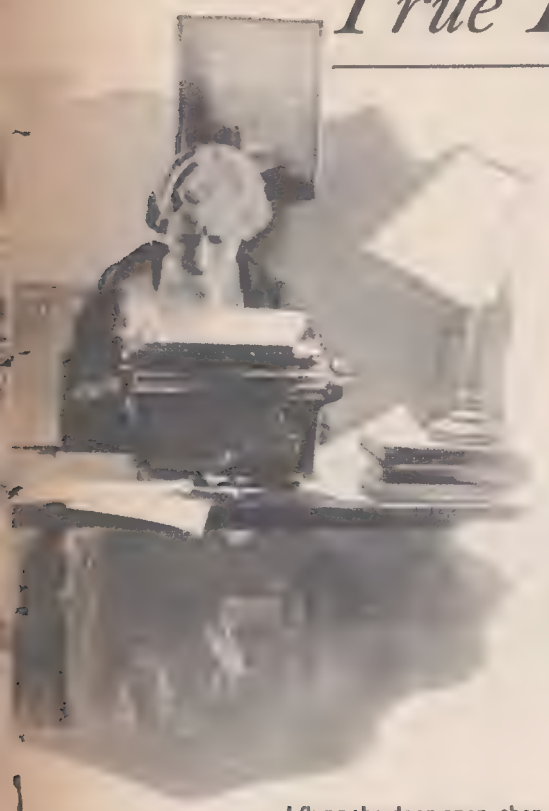
It was with a tired brain still worrying round and round in its hopeless search for an idea that I finally trudged up stairs to bed. My wife was sleeping peacefully in her own, and I moved as noiselessly as possible so as not to awaken her, for it was very late.

If I had expected the gods of sleep to come to my aid, I was disappointed, for after a night of restless tossing which finally ended in the deep slumber of the exhausted, I awoke with a mind as barren of ideas as when I had come to bed. It was a terrible, frightening experience, as if a part of my own brain had been locked and barred against me. I felt in some mysterious way, that if only I could break the spell and get this one particular story off my chest, that I should be able to go on again in the old way. If not? Of that I dared not think.

Whatever her inmost thoughts, my wife did not in any way refer to my work or the difficult period she knew I must be experiencing, instead she went about her household duties in her usual, quiet, capable way, and after a dilatory breakfast, I went wearily to my study, and what I felt to be the well-nigh hopeless task ahead of me.

My typewriter stood where I had left it on my untidily littered table. From the carrier a sheet of manuscript paper still stared accusingly; I shuddered as I saw it, and then, as I moved closer, my heart gave a great leap of amazement not unmixed with fear. For the paper in the typewriter was not bare, as I had left it overnight, but covered with script, also, beside it lay a heap of carelessly strewn typescript, just as would have

True Life Stories



I flung the door open, then started back in amazement.

happened had I completed, or partially completed, my story in the usual way. It is a fad of mine never to read my work immediately I have finished, but to leave it as it comes, helter skelter, from the machine.

With trembling hands I picked up the scattered pages, and as I read my wonder deepened. Here indeed was exactly the type of plot for which I had been so laboriously searching, still more remarkable it was told as I should have told it. Every author possesses his own unmistakable style, and this was mine, of that there was not the slightest doubt.

Suddenly the idea occurred to me that perhaps after all I had written it. I had gone to bed with my mind straining in one direction. Was it not possible that some subconscious power had taken control, and that, in my sleep, I had arisen and come down to my study and ran the story off. It was true that I had not, to my knowledge, ever previously walked in my sleep, but I had heard of such things.

The more I turned the matter over, the more confident I became that this must be the only explanation. Indeed there did not appear to be any other; burglars don't break into the house of a struggling writer of fiction for the express purpose of doing his work for him, and doing it uncommonly well.

As far as I could see, it was a case of the sleep theory being the correct one for the simple reason that there could not be any other, always, of course, leaving out the supernatural and that I would not entertain for a moment.

Calling my wife I explained the matter to her and asked her opinion. She seemed inclined to pooh pooh the sleep story and said that I must have written the yarn before coming to bed, and then forgotten all about it. It was obviously, she said, a case of a temporary lapse of memory due to overwork, and strongly advised me to ease up for a spell.

I could not agree with her, the long vigil of the previous night remained much too vivid, but for the fear of worrying her I did not insist, also I promised that I would take a rest, but not before the series I was engaged upon was finished; despite her almost tearful entreaties, I remained adamant on this point. I added that now the spell was broken I felt sure that I should be able to carry on in my old facile way.

At first it appeared that this would be so, the next two stories in the series came off the bat in the old reassuring way, in fact they seemed if anything better than those which had gone before. It was as if my sleep effort had started me on a new tack, indeed, although it was so indisputably my style, there was a freshness, an added touch of human interest, for which I had long been seeking and which set an example I was determined to follow.

By dint of ceaseless, unrelenting hard work, I at last reached the last of the ten stories. With an eye on future commissions I determined to make this the king pin of them all. A master plot, told on a continuous high note was my ambition. Alas, once again I planned too optimistically; when it came to the actual work I could no more write that tenth episode than I could have written the Iliad. It just would not come.

Of course, by now I had sense enough to know that my brain really did need a rest. On the other hand, there was all I had been striving for ever so many weary years depending on the successful completion of my commission. That once done, I could afford to ease up a bit. I determined to do the job if it killed me.

It looked like doing the latter; strive as I might, the idea for this important last story simply would not come. All I succeeded in doing was to fill my wastepaper basket with crumpled sheets of useless typescript, and when I went to bed on the third of three hopeless nights I felt that I had come to the end of my tether. My wife was, as usual, sleeping peacefully and I crawled between the sheets not much caring if I never woke again. I was, as a matter of fact, precious near to a nervous breakdown.

For a while I tossed and turned fretfully until, at last, I dropped into a restless doze. How long this lasted I cannot say. All I know is that I was suddenly awakened by a faint, but unmistakably familiar sound, horribly familiar in my present condition.

It was the tap, tapping of typewriter keys. There was no mistaking it. I would know the sound of my noisy old machine anywhere.

For a moment the hair stood erect at the nape of my neck, and then, with an effort, I pulled myself together. I have been called all sorts of things in my life, but I have never been branded coward. Whoever or whatever it was that was using my typewriter, I intended to find out. If it was a ghost, it was evidently a friendly one.

Not wishing to frighten my wife unnecessarily, I slipped stealthily out of bed and through the partially opened door which I must have omitted to close, without switching on the light.

Just as stealthily I crept down the stairs to my study. As I approached I could see a thin flicker of light through a door which had also been left open, while, more distinctly now, came that eerie tapping.

Swiftly at the last, I sprang forward and flung the door wide, and then I started back in amazement, for there, dressed only in an old loose gown over her pyjamas, typing away as if her life depended upon it, was the wife I thought safely tucked away in her bed.

It all came out then, of course. Kate, it appeared, had been for a long time writing surreptitiously, painstakingly modelling her style on mine. Thinking it might hurt my male pride, she had not mentioned a word to me, but on the previous occasion when I had found myself stuck, she had slipped down after I was asleep and written a story for me. The success of her little plan had been such that she determined to repeat it when I was again up a tree, and indeed, had half completed a story which proved a winner.

I soon convinced her that, not only was I not jealous, but that I should welcome a collaborator.

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Dead Ships Live Again

Down comes one of the *Mauretania's* mighty funnels in the ship-breaker's yard. But the metal will be used again.

by

George GODWIN

IN a bare room whose windows frame vignettes of a busy port, a silent crowd of men waits on the words of the auctioneer.

But no flowery speech comes from the rostrum, and no aproned workmen heave up for inspection proferred wares.

After all, there is no need to extol to prospective buyers the merits of wares whose virtues and value are well known to them. Besides, you cannot carry to the auction room the subject of your sale when it happens to be a 60,000 ton liner.

Weeks before a great ship comes under the hammer, counting, measuring and estimating have been proceeding aboard. And while the auctioneer's men have been thus employed, prospective buyers have wandered the silent decks and prowled about that world of steel which is a great liner's engine rooms.

Thus there is, at the auction of a great ship, no element of the dramatic, save for those who have imagination and that feeling for the sea which, we like to tell each other, is in the blood of every Englishman.

To-day, a strange revolution is proceeding in the world of ships, for a whole generation of famous ships are vanishing from the familiar ocean paths; and names most familiar are fast becoming merely memories.

Gone are the *Leviathan*, the *Mauretania*, the *Olympic*, the *Carmonia* and *Caroma*, known as the "Pretty Sisters," the *Annadale* and *Kenilworth Castles*, the *Calgaric*, the *Minnetonka*, the *Empress of France*, to name but a few of this great company.

Well, where have they gone? And what has been their ultimate fate?

To the man unacquainted with the intricacies of the shipping world it is always a baffling thing that a great ship passes from her familiar journeyings to the auction room and the silence of the ship-breaker's yard.

Why are these famous ships, seemingly in their prime, sent to an ignominous death?

Here are floating palaces that might well be the pride of man. And he finds no further use for them than wantonly to destroy with acetylene blow pipe and saw what he has fashioned with the skill and knowledge of ten hundred years.

This is the great enigma of the world of ships: that we are busy to-day breaking up magnificent craft as wantonly, it would seem, as any idle boy.

Last year alone 844 ships were broken up—some 557,340 of tonnage. This year that figure may be topped.

Swiftly the great ships, so long household words, are vanishing from the seas, victims of a government policy that has as its slogan: destruction means construction. We are destroying, but we are also building. The iron law of necessity is here in operation.

Thirty years ago, designers completed plans for what was to be the wonder ship of the world.

Three million pounds sterling went into her vast hull, her intricate machinery, her luxurious appointments.

And, a few months ago, this same ship changed hands. And when the gavel fell, one man in a crowded auction room became sole owner of the *Mauretania* for a matter of £80,000.

In the same way, a little later, Sir John Jarvis, with a nod of the head, became sole owner of the old *Olympic*, pride of the Atlantic service. On that occasion £100,000 changed hands.

£100,000 for a condemned *Olympic* and another £100,000 to break her up, to tear up those exquisite fittings, to take down and hoist clear that powerful heart of glittering machinery, to saw and sunder that gallant hull.

Well, that means a £100,000 to go in wages and Jarrow can do with it.

But quite aside from economic policy, the sad end of these great ships is made inevitable by causes other than those of world trade dislocation.

The life of a great modern ship, it is said, is seldom more than thirty years. By that time the steel of her giant hull is apt to crystalise and the swift and shining members of her great engines know weariness.

It seems strange to the uninitiated that a ship, like a woman, should know great weariness while still her outward form is fair: yet so it is.

Great ships do not gradually wear out: they become suddenly old. The stout heart fails, and so, as the merciful man with his horse, the worn-out ship is consigned to the knackers.

Let us follow one there.

The general idea of a ship-breaker's yard is one of confusion. The truth is otherwise. The ship, towed to her last berth at the quayside of the breaker's yard, is "cut down" deck by deck.

Great cranes swing her funnels clear. Her bridge is borne away and her chart-house, too, and presently up through the vast gaping holes that were once well-pumiced deck, come the hoists bearing her engines, piece by piece.

Thus dishonoured, she is borne to her grave, the tidal dock whose floor slopes so that as the tide falls the stricken monster is left dry at the bows.

Tide by tide, as she is dismembered from the bows, the liner in process of dissolution is hauled forward, until the task is done.

Blow pipe and screaming saw eat into her steel and soon what was a liner is just so much scrap loaded on to the trucks in the siding.

If you would see such a grave-yard to-day, you must travel north—to Jarrow, to the Clyde, to the Forth, where, from Rosyth to Bo'ness, the yards are littered with the near-skeletons of once-great ships.

What becomes of all that went to the making of these doomed ships?

The answer uncovers a romance, the romance of the great graveyards that become, by the alchemy of man's busy hands, places of resurrection.

For this wholesale process of destruction is but the prelude to another. Out of death comes life. The dead ships live again.

Next spring the giant liner *Queen Mary*, perfect in all her parts, will be gently nosed from her birthplace on the Clyde by many busy tugs.

Her silent heart will pulse, her great hull will quiver at the first revolutions of her giant engines. She will become a living ship.

A living ship? Or the new form of many ships? The latter, surely. For when this monster makes her maiden voyage some part of many a ship that lives only as a name will find new life in her.

The steel plates of her immense hull, could they talk like the pots in the Rubáiyát of Omar, would have tales to tell of storms and tropic seas. For, if steel becomes "tired," it may also find renewal in the white-hot furnaces of the Sheffield iron foundries. And it is there that 95 per cent. of all steel plating from our broken-up ships goes.

Thus, though the *Queen Mary* is new, much of her parts is not. And this is true, too, of her fittings, here and there.

When the *Mauretania* was broken up they took much of her lovely panelling and gave it a new lease of life on the new giant.

When a great ship comes under the hammer there is never any lack of buyers, for the material which is put into British ships is good material and always has a market value.

Take, for example, the special metals—the bronze, lead, zinc and so forth: these are always in demand. It is Sheffield that knows how to turn to useful purposes anything that came out of Mother Earth, that takes them.

Look at the lamp-posts in your town. The chances are that, could they speak they would claim relationship with some ship whose name you knew long years ago.

Consider the sharp edge of your razor-blade and think: Alas, poor Yorick! For, if that blade did not come from Sweden, then the long odds are it came from the steel plate of some once-famous ship.

Do you lie upon an iron bed? Then the chances again are that you lie on some part of a dead ship, reshaped ashore.

Even the pots and pans in your kitchen, the shovel you use in your garden and its railings and that hammer with which you make that railings damage good, are, far more likely than not but parts of a thing that once knew the Seven Seas and received upon its painted face the shining image of the Southern Cross.

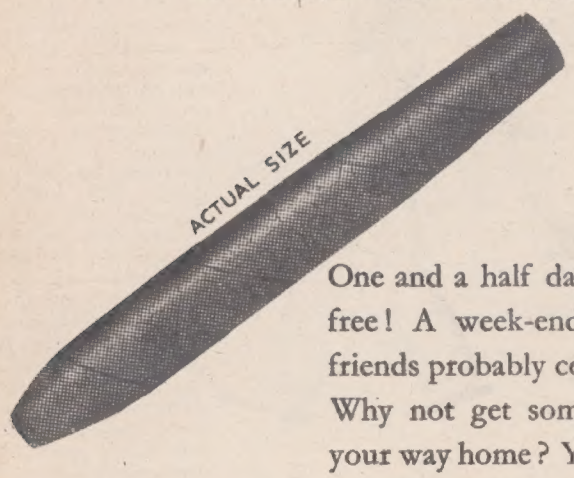
Here are three hundred Australian oak Queen Anne chairs on offer. A head nods and a pencil moves. Where will they go, those chairs, once used in the pillared halls of a giant liner that is no more?

There is a steady demand for them, since, as has been observed, for our ships we take best. Much of such stuff, with long years of wear ahead, finds its way to clubs, hotels, dance halls and other places in need of large quantities of furniture.

There is, indeed, practically nothing of a great ship that is not put to some useful purpose when she goes to her grave.

She dies, but only as a prelude to a new existence. She dies: but she lives again.

This Saturday



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You're Telling Us!

A COCKER SPANIEL of aristocratic appearance has Mrs. Geoffrey Hodgson, of Highgate, London, and being fond of the animal she has been observing him thoughtfully and wondering about Cave men and women who lived in the dawn of history and but for whom we should not be here. Joe is the name of the dog. "I have watched Joe sitting by the fire," Mrs. Hodgson says, "on many occasions for the special reason that I wondered what he could be thinking about. He sits there without moving a muscle. You could not say that he was looking at any object in particular, yet he certainly was not looking at nothing. His brain was working, for any brain must work, even in sleep. What sort of things does a dog think about that keep him so serenely occupied in peace and content? Animals do think, possibly a great deal more than many human beings, for dogs dream. Joe has bad dreams and good dreams, dreams of food and the fireside, dreams of fighting and the chase.

I COULD CLASSIFY his dreams by the queer noises he makes. I expect that if we knew what occupied a dog's mind when he relaxes we should have a secret worth having, for undoubtedly our cave-men ancestors must have thought very much as dogs think to-day. The amount of reading that we do to-day, apart from listening to the radio and talking pictures and plays, gives us a tremendous amount of thinking matter to turn over in our heads. Our ancestors thought only of their food, their fires, their mates and their children. Beyond these sweet, simple things their minds did not know how to go. I think they were lucky. When I sit and look at Joe, *I know they were lucky . . .*"

WE MUST TAKE ANOTHER look at Shag. For Mr. R. V., of Droitwich, writes of cities. "Those," he says, "who talk about women and the share of the world's work should get up early one morning in London, Birmingham, or any big city. A woman's work may or may not be 'never done'—and this seems a subject which troubles you more than a little, but there is no doubt about the fact that young women work hard, and work cheerfully. Watch the early-morning trams and omnibuses. You will see thousands of young girls of 16, 17 and 18 crowding aboard with their attaché cases—many more girls than men, it seems. They all have jobs. They all are bread winners. And does anyone seriously dispute that these stenographers and office-workers work just as long, and just as industriously as their brothers, who make more noise about what they do?"

If you are out after a young man.

A WOMAN'S WORK," writes Uncle Joe, clearing the matter up for us once and for all, "is never done because she don't like doing it and just don't do it. That's all. And as far as I can see there's no argument about it. Take it or leave it, a woman's work is never done. But about those girls on the trams and buses, of course they are all on the job, and with their attaché cases, too. They have to get married, and who would they marry but the milkman if they stayed at home? If you are after shooting duck you take a punt and sit in the marshes early morning, or late in the evening. If you are out after a young man, you take an attaché case and sit in an office, early morning, all day, and late in the evening. Besides, if you want a test just to see how the world's work is split in practice next time you're down my way here in Cornwall drop in. Always glad to see a visitor. I'll show you from my garden wall, crooners barred. When they're not hiking in these parts they are riding bicycles made for two and there is a hill along my garden wall. The girls walk up that hill in a bunch at the back, taking peeks into mirrors to see that their back hair is okay. Who is that pushing the bicycles up the hill? You know the answer."

YES, UNCLE. And so to "Grandfer," who writes to us from Nottingham the Notorious, looking back on life. "When you're 77," enquires Grandfer, "as I am to-day, what will you be thinking about? I wonder! You begin to think a bit when you get to be my age, and not so much, as young folks reckon, about how soon you're going to die. I don't worry about that, but I keep thinking back. I remember seeing old women past 'work' sewing buttons on cards for 5d. a gross of cards of 12 buttons a card—average earnings 1s. a day of anything up to sixteen hours. Men killed in the pits used to be put on one side until knocking-off time; though dead, they did not interfere with the profits. I remember sailing ships coming in the winter time on the shore, and there was booty for the daredevils who used to bury casks of butter in the sands and retrieve them when the coast was clear.

I REMEMBER MOTHER SMOKING a clay pipe with twist tobacco (none of your scented mixtures), red flannel gifts from the vicar's wife if you were ill (for regular church-goers only), Springheeled Jack who used to terrify folk by jumping from church yards in the early morning. I remember a lot as I grow older. We had no PASSING SHOWS when I was young: there was precious little to read. When I was a boy we had to pay twopence to attend Old Johnny's school, and often we got holidays for Old Johnny liked to drink strong liquors. If we did not bring our twopences on Monday morning he would chase us away from his door. My own grandfather told me once that when the Duke (*of Wellington*) saw the many dead on the field of Waterloo he turned away and cried—the Iron Duke."

WHY NOT? Generals die in bed, not on battlefields, and that sort of thing is bound to upset them. Mr. Harry Rogers, of Shameless Sheffield, sends us a plot. "The hero," explains Mr. Rogers, "suspects his wife of an affair with a rising young barrister, and surprises her in the barrister's rooms. The wife swears she has been there alone and has not seen the barrister. The husband, who loves her, believes her—and then he notices the blotter on the man's desk. The ink is fresh and the sheet is covered with games of noughts-and-crosses. "No one plays herself at O's-and-X's!" he hisses and striding out of the room, divorces her."

WHAT! AND THEY WERE only playing noughts-and-crosses?

SERVICE

on motoring, travel, holidays, dress, finance, home, education, and every other practical subject is given free by "The Passing Show" Advice Service, 93 Long Acre, London, W.C.2. Enclose stamped envelope with query.

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Registration forms are on page 3. If you are not already a registered reader, sign to-day and provide not only yourself but your family with this great Free Gift of Security.

Words After the Letters

CLUES ACROSS

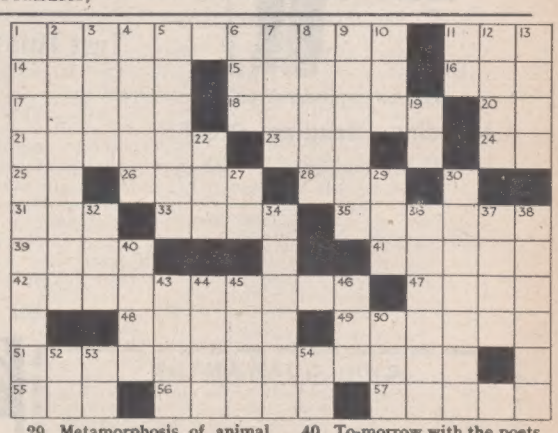
1. Rope this man for an enemy of the human race.
11. To be sought in Saturn but not in Jupiter.
14. He who 11 across doubtless did this later.
15. Rings a bull, but at a distance.
16. And the poet said, "Dear O Dear" (hidden).
17. How coarse! But perhaps an innocent number.
18. To laugh with tongue striking teeth (vide dictionary).
20. The tail of 12.
21. Yin mixed with 23 for nigh a century.
23. Another number may hold the ball.
24. Not to be used with 20, say the grammarians.
25. With 24 becomes dietary, suspiciously cannabalistic.
26. There's a suggestion of homicide in this nautical turn.
28. Change the vowel and you'll tear the material.
31. This by re-iteration may 2.
33. You and I are in a jar.
35. Rested holds back.
39. Only a detail, but may be important.
41. Incendiarism mainly 55.
42. Am mud or men (anagram).
47. In an idiot at large a particle is hidden.
48. Braid into furious.
49. Beware the extortioner.
51. A gentleman to the end but not a wise one.
55. It's a boy! Undoubtedly!
56. When winter comes so may this.
57. Most people find these trying.

E	V	E	N	T	■	O	P	P	O	N	E	N	T	■
P	O	L	E	■	T	■	O	L	D	E	R	■	H	■
I	R	A	S	C	I	B	L	E	■	T	A	S	T	E
S	A	N	T	A	C	L	A	U	S	■	S	C	A	R
O	C	■	O	R	■	E	R	R	O	R	■	O	R	B
D	I	O	R	A	M	A	■	I	N	E	P	T	■	A
E	T	A	■	M	O	T	E	S	■	S	I	C	■	L
S	Y	S	T	E	M	■	Y	O	U	T	H	■	I	■
■	■	T	A	L	E	N	T	■	A	L	T	A	R	S
A	N	■	L	■	N	O	O	■	T	T	■	L	O	T
M	O	R	E	■	T	W	O	■	S	■	J	E	T	S

Solution to last week's puzzle

CLUES DOWN

1. One would not expect 49 to be this.
2. A prolonged 18 might do this.
3. 10 long.
4. Saul sought these.
5. To come closer.
6. Water possibly.
7. Staring you in the face? We sincerely hope not.
8. Unaspirated comparative of 6 for a beast.
9. Here we are spoiled.
10. Previous.
11. Precisely half of 3.
12. Curtail the man for the lady.
13. Meet in a Salopian stream.
19. The "sappers" arrive (abbreviation).
22. A personal note about this tree.
27. The heart of 33.
29. Metamorphosis of animal into vegetable.
30. In and of these places there are various kinds.
32. "Of purest ray serene," maybe!
34. You may shake this conundrum.
36. Three in one this time
37. Thus spake Pretty Polly.
38. Growls from the beast.
40. To-morrow with the poets.
43. A rude fellow may contemptuously retort with this.
44. A fratricidal victim.
45. A fluvial line in Egypt.
46. Ceramic gum.
50. Found in 57.
52. Definitely negative.
53. Part of a pub.
54. Bisect 39 for this.



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See page 30.

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A. M. Woollaston (now known as A. M. Saldo), from a photograph by Naudin of Kensington, taken in the year **1902**

1903

A reproduction of the original photograph taken at the final rehearsal on the London Pavilion stage. The weight of the pad, bridge and passengers—*exclusive of the car*—exceeded half a ton.

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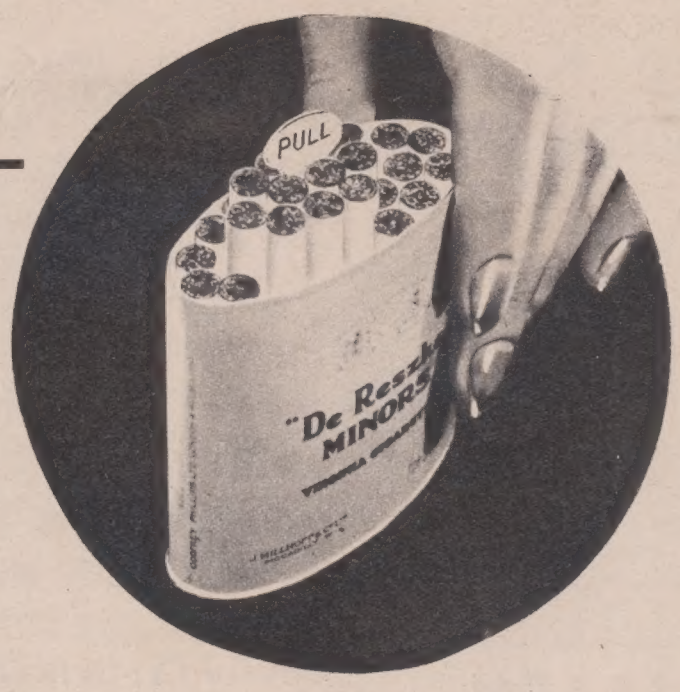

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